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A NOVEL.

BY

Harry Hughes.



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# KATHERINE BARRY.

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## CHAPTER I.

It was commencement day at Plainfield Seminary. A bright June morning, with not a cloud to fleck its perfect sky, had ushered in the long-looked-for day. A lazy northwest breeze, loaded with fragrance of near-by garden flowers and a suggestion of distant daisies and buttercups, stirred the leaves of the great elms and maples shading the seminary grounds and rippled the ivy, almost covering with leafy panoply, the old gray walls of the seminary building. From a flagstaff above the bellfry, the blue and red of "old glory" gleamed in the clear sunlight and, above it, a long streamer in light blue and yellow, the seminary colors, gave a festive air to the staid ensemble. Along the wide porch and out upon the lawn, groups of schoolgirls in holiday apparel were discussing the coming events of the occasion, while others ran in and out completing their preparations for the part each was to take in the exercises of the day. At one end of the long porch, two girls were leaning upon their arms over the railing, talking to a third who stood upon the ground outside. They wore the badge of the



graduating class and were evidently in that state of mind peculiar to young candidates for commencement honors, wherein gladness and suppressed excitement control alternately, according as one condition or the other is favored by the moment's situation.

"Well, Kate," said one of those upon the porch, "do tell us where you got those lovely locust blossoms! Isn't it rather early in the season for them? I did not suppose they blossomed before the first of July."

"Nor did I," spoke her companion, "indeed I suspect these never grew hereabouts—there is something foreign in their appearance, although," as Kate held up a spray under their faces, "I must confess their fragrance is a dear, familiar—my! they are just too sweet for anything!"

Whereupon Kate broke two sprays from the branch in her hand and gave one to each of the girls as if to divert their inquisitiveness, but that only stimulated their curiosity, for, fastening the blossoms at their bosoms, they again besought her to tell whence came the flowers and who sent them.

"Well, girls," said Kate, "there is nothing foreign about these flowers, I assure you. Mr. Harmon got them for me from a young locust tree out there upon our own seminary grounds. It stands in a sheltered corner at the south side of the stable, and for that reason, I suppose, it blossoms so early."

"Oh, yes," chimed the girls together, "we should have guessed as much. Really, Kate, your candor, though, is charming."

"Thank you," replied Kate, bowing low in mock deference and making a sort of military salute with her branch of locust flowers. "Your compliment is most gracious."



"There is Mr. Harmon now!" said one of the girls in tones somewhat subdued, as she glanced toward the street.

"Where?" inquired her companion, looking about and turning to observe the direction of vision taken by the other in making the discovery.

"Don't you see him?" she replied, in a tone of pseudo-impatience and with a playful push upon the shoulder in the direction she would have her look. "He has just come through the gate with the tall gentleman in a gray suit."

Kate had turned to look in the direction given, but the lawn in front was, by this time, so thronged that, from her lower position, she did not at once see either gentleman. Raising herself on tiptoe by pulling with one hand on the railing, she looked, for a moment, over the heads of the people and, as she dropped back to her place, said: "Why, that is Judge Sheldon, who is to hand us our diplomas to-day."

At this announcement the girls both turned at once with interested gaze, and for a minute, looked toward the gentlemen in silence. Then one of them, turning again to Kate, drew a long and not altogether artificial sigh as she said: "Dear me! how I wish it was all over. My composition has become so commonplace to me that I am quite ashamed of it, and last evening I made some changes in it that seem to improve it—but, I don't know; and just as likely as not, I'll stumble when I come to the altered places. If it had only been ——"

Whatever she was about to say was interrupted by her companion turning excitedly toward her and Kate saying in a loud whisper: "They are actually coming this way!"

Kate stepped around the porch corner and saw the gentlemen approaching. Mr. Harmon perceiving her,



lifted his hat and, upon drawing near introduced the judge. Kate bowed, introduced her classmates, and then turning to Mr. Harmon reminded him that she was under obligations for the judge's acquaintance already—since the evening before.

At this moment Mr. Dabney, the principal, having perceived the judge, came over quickly from a group near the main entrance, greeted him cordially and led him upon the porch, whence, after a few moments' delay in conversation, both disappeared within the seminary. The girls, as if suddenly conscious of impending obligations, excused themselves and hurried up to their desks. Kate and Mr. Harmon walked over to a rustic seat built around the base of a great maple, a little apart from the throng, where they seated themselves as Mr. Harmon, fanning himself with his straw hat, said: "Miss Barry, I am glad of an opportunity this morning to apologize for the freedom with which I criticized Dr. Belden's sermon last evening. You know that I take radical views of religious questions generally, but perhaps you were not prepared to hear the immortality of the soul discussed quite so freely. The doctor, in his sermon on the great question in his text: 'If a man die, shall he live again,' gave us so little that is new and assumed so much as beyond question, that, whether in disappointment or resentment, I went further than I would in stating my belief, or perhaps my disbelief."

"Indeed Mr. Harmon," replied Kate, "I have thought a great deal of what you said last evening, and I must confess the more I think of it, the more shocked I am. I can not understand how any one can permit himself to doubt, in these days, what all ages and all people have held in some form. It seems to me that you can hardly be serious in making such assertions, Mr. Harmon,



Really, it does not, for while I know what your view of religious belief, in general, is, because you have so often talked to me about it, I never before heard you say anything that led me to believe that you really doubted immortality." As she uttered these last words, Kate's voice and manner gave intimation of emotional disturbance, and Mr. Harmon, noticing it, placed his hat upon the seat beside him and turning toward Kate said in tones of penitence and conciliation:

"I regret very much that I said anything to disturb your notion of right, Miss Barry, and I beg that you will think of it no longer. When I came over early this morning expressly to see you and to learn whether I had unintentionally left a hurtful impression by my talk last evening, as you know, Miss Benton was with you, and when I suggested the search for locust blossoms, my purpose was wholly to disengage you from her so that we might talk more freely, but you know how entirely I failed." Then, as for a bit of diverting pleasantries, he added: "What a simple old soul she is! When I said that I feared the dew would wet through her slippers if she accompanied us over the lawn, you know how confidently she asked us to wait while she ran up to her room for a pair of shoes!"

Kate smiled as he said this, but before she made reply the chapel bell began to ring and she arose from her seat with a little start. Mr. Harmon arose also in a half-reluctant way, and, hat in hand, accompanied Kate as she hurried to the library door, at the north side, where he bade her good-morning, and, going around to the front, he soon became one of the throng moving up the steps and into the seminary chapel where the exercises of the day were to be held.



## CHAPTER II.

Mr. Harmon was of ordinary stature and about twenty-five years of age. His hair was black, his eyes dark-brown and his complexion pale. His head was large and well-proportioned, and his face, wide at the top, seemed narrow below because of a disproportionately narrow and prominent chin. His mouth was rather wide and his lips thin. He wore no beard, but his hair was allowed to grow long and was brushed back over his ears. He was a student-at-law in a Plainfield office, and expected to be admitted to practice in the ensuing autumn. He was the only son of his parents, who were old residents of Plainfield and well to do. They had one daughter, six years his junior, who was a member of the graduating class at the seminary of the year previous. He took an active interest in politics, and had won a local reputation for eloquence throughout his native county. He was popular and esteemed for his talents and for his excellent character. He was generally known as fond of argument, a ready, ardent advocate of any cause for principle, and as one of the "best read" men in the country. In religious matters he was regretfully looked upon as rather inclined to freethinking by the more pious people of Plainfield, but such view of him worked little injury to the high regard and almost paternal pride they took in him. He had been elected president of the village for two succeeding terms, had been a county supervisor, and was one of the trustees of the seminary, and influential in introducing some modern element into its old, conservative management,



Plainfield Seminary, although one of the oldest educational institutions in the country, had never developed beyond the "home boarding school for a limited number of girls." It was founded many years before, when the country was yet new, by two elderly maiden sisters who had come, no one ever knew why, into the wild country of this region from the vicinity of Boston. In the first year of their arrival, these ladies impressed the rude settlers of the hamlet with a most deferential regard for their genteel manners and superior qualifications. They were very dignified and reserved, and dressed somewhat after the manner of Quakers. The elder was a little "peculiar," and many tales are yet told by the older dames of the village of the queer doings of stately old Miss Batty. That she was something of an artist is evidenced by a dingy oil painting in an ancient gilt frame, bearing in a corner her initials and the date 1821, which hangs to this day at the top of the second stairs in the rear hall of the seminary. The younger sister was organist at the Presbyterian church during the thirty-eight years of her residence in Plainfield, and it is said of her that she was never absent from her place in the organ loft in all that time but on one occasion. On that Sunday morning her favorite tabby, to escape a pursuing dog, had ran up a tree, and Miss Helen had become so exercised over the slow and difficult matter of getting the cat down again that she ignored all lesser considerations, and devoted the half of God's day to undoing the dog's work.

The seminary had its beginning in a "select school" which the Batty sisters had opened in the second year of their residence in Plainfield at the solicitation of a few families, and, as time went by, owing either to the management and skill of the sisters or to the local demand



for such educational facilities, the school grew in usefulness and importance to the full stature of its present local eminence. In the estimation of the good people of Plainfield it had always stood in an atmosphere of moral respectability, and, although never identified with any religious denomination, the townspeople had early learned to confidently intrust to the pious personality of the Batty sisters the care and general religious guidance of their daughters. The character thus woven into its early growth, persisted through the changes of many years to the present time, and imparted to succeeding principals and teachers quite as much of moral and religious character as they brought to it. The Batty sisters lived to see the seminary an established and successful institution. Within a walled inclosure beyond the garden, at the south side of the orchard, two grass-grown graves mark the place where their bodies were laid years ago. Each year, on the twenty-fourth day of May, founder's day, the graves are formally visited by teachers and pupils, and decorated with flowers.

The class of this year contained eight members, and was larger by one or two than any graduated in several years. It was also remarkable for the wide range it represented in the following features: first, in avoirdupois: Marcia Perkins weighed a trifle over two hundred pounds, while Nellie Jenks balanced the beam at seventy-one; second, in stature: Ada Bennett was five feet ten inches in height, while Julia Dow reached only four feet two inches; third, in complexion: Sarah Collins was a pronounced blonde, while Jennie Fergusson was as dark as a senorita; and fourth, in religion: Katherine Barry was a Catholic, while the others were all members of some Protestant denomination. For the first time in its history, Plainfield Seminary included in its graduating



class a Roman Catholic. This, in itself was not, perhaps, noteworthy because the seminary was neither founded nor conducted under the auspices of any denomination, but taken in connection with the fact that heretofore the pupils had been uniformly protestant and that whatever of religious atmosphere pervaded its halls had always been distinctly of that faith, the presence of a Catholic now was suggestive of radical innovation. Furthermore, the seminary was about to confer its highest honors upon this solitary representative of that church. Throughout the course Kate had stood at the head of her class, had won the medal established in the will of old deacon Seeley, years ago, for "greatest proficiency in mathematics," had secured the free scholarship offered by the Musical Conservatory at Springfield, and had been elected by her classmates to deliver the valedictory on graduation day. The honor thus conferred by her classmates gave evidence of her popularity, notwithstanding her religion. During her two years course at the seminary, whatever of antipathy was felt when she first came among them, had rapidly yielded to the subtle influence of her personality, so unobtrusive and yet so all-pervading. Her natural gifts, her proficiency and exemplary deportment had made her a favorite with her teachers and given her superior influence among the pupils. She was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer who was well known throughout the county. He had emigrated to this country from Ireland with his young wife upwards of fifty years before, cleared the land which he then purchased, and built thereon the first "hewed log house" in that section. On this same farm, two miles west from Plainfield, he had lived all those years, acquired a competence and reared his children, two sons and a daughter. At the time of which I write,



his sons were married and settled in the West, a third having died in infancy. Kate, the only daughter and the youngest, was nineteen years of age. She was slightly above medium stature, slender and well proportioned. Her eyes were typically "Irish blue," her hair auburn and her skin of a milk-like whiteness that accentuated the damask of her cheeks. Her face was oval, her forehead high and her chin, though somewhat full, was well formed. Her voice, clear and musical, was free of nasal tones; her movements and attitudes naturally graceful. She had grown up on her father's farm favored by all the conditions so conducive to health of body and mind. The pure air, simple diet, regular hours and freedom from physical confinement had given her an admirable physique. The industry, sturdy honesty and simple aspirations of her father, the diligence, self-denial and piety of her mother had, by example and precept, united in endowing her with good sense, a kind heart and a large share of domestic virtue. In early girlhood, she had learned with her brothers upon the farm the methods of handling horses and the management of cattle. She was a fearless rider, and at sixteen years of age, had won the prize at the county fair for excellence in horsemanship. She knew, like an expert, the points in cattle, and could tell at a glance whether an animal was better adapted for beef or for butter. She was familiar with the different varieties of sheep and swine and poultry, and knew all the details of butter and cheese making, of canning berries and making pickles. She knew every wild flower of the country-side, at least by its common name, at what time it blossomed and where to look for it. She could tell the name, as she knew it, of any bird of that region at a momentary sight of its flight, or upon hearing a single note or the sound of its voice. All this



had come to her without purpose or special study—it was part of her growth, of her life. Her course at the seminary had now added the learning contained in books, had formulated and systematized her information and developed in her the confidence that comes with the acquisition of scientific knowledge.

During her stay at the seminary, she had become better acquainted with the townspeople through the social opportunities afforded by the school. She made many friends, and had not a few admirers among the young men of the village. Of these, John Harmon was most favored and the most constant in attendance. His success had become so marked before the end of the first year that his rivals had practically admitted his victory by leaving the field open to him almost exclusively. Reception days at the seminary always found him there with eyes and thoughts and words for no one but Kate, and on every other occasion when opportunity offered he was with her. His love making was so singular, though, that not even Kate knew, for a long time, whether he sought her because she was always an interested listener, or because he felt for her what no word of his had told and no overt act had manifested. It was plain that he liked to be in her company, and when there, to talk of matters philosophic, scientific or historic, and to engage her interest in such subjects. He was an omnivorous reader with a particular liking for metaphysical studies. When he discovered a book of any special merit, he hastened with it to Kate and without comment, requested her to read it. Such reading was often so heavy and obtruse that her interest awakened only when he discussed the matter with her afterwards. In those discussions he had unconsciously revealed little by little the condition of his mind with regard to faith, original



sin, vicarious atonement and various other of the fundamental tenets of the Christian church. His apparent purpose to make no disclosures of his own conclusions with reference to such questions was not owing to any lack of moral courage, but was due, rather, to his consideration for the convictions of others. He had been carefully reared in the Protestant faith, and it was the hope of his mother and of a maternal aunt that he would grow up to be a minister of the gospel, so early did he manifest interest in religion, and seek information with regard to questions of religious belief. But later, while even yet in his 'teens, the boldness of his discussions and the freedom of his criticisms brought such pain and disappointment to those he loved, and caused such estrangement among some of his friends, that he learned a lesson in discretion and resolved, thereafter, to regard with more careful consideration the religious opinions of others. So well had he borne this in mind that, as stated heretofore, in popular opinion, he was regarded, in a general way only, as inclined to freethinking. To Kate, however, he had, without intending it, given a pretty accurate view of his mind, not only because they had read and discussed together books such as, in the nature of things, would bring this about, but also because, without admitting it to himself, his regard for Kate had developed such a degree of confidence that his reserve had become, consequently, relaxed. When the discussion touched upon dogma, as it sometimes did, the strength of Kate's religious belief immediately asserted itself. She was a willing partner so long as the question was a scientific one or even religious in character, if it did not involve any element of faith or dogma. John Harmon early learned this, and consequently purposed to observe proper regard for her conscience. If, in the fervor of



his argument he at times went too far, a gentle protest from Kate turned him quickly toward safer ground. She loved to listen to him, he was so earnest, so honest, so eloquent, his mind so stored with information, his heart so full of altruism. Had he been a conceited man, the homage of Kate's eyes when at times she sat enwrapt, would have distracted his line of thought and turned him from his subject to the candid worship manifest in her beautiful eyes. But when he paused, it was only to obtain some expression of assent, some recognition of his conclusion. Her charms, however, were not lost to him—they were the beautiful setting for her more beautiful mind.



### CHAPTER III.

When John Harmon left Kate at the library door, she hurried upstairs to her room. As she reached the corridor at the top of the stairway, she saw her father and mother, who had just arrived, going in advance of her toward her room and, running after them on tiptoe till she overtook them, she threw her arms about their necks from behind and kissed them right and left.

“Oh! Katherine dear,” said her mother—she was always called Katherine at home—“ye nearly frightened th’ life out o’ me. But I’m glad we found ye, fer I was afeared we were late an’ ye would be with the rest o’ thim goin’ up in th’ hall.”

“In another half-minute,” replied Kate, “you would have to seek me there. Come,” she added, taking her mother’s wrap upon her arm, and leading her by the hand, “come, we must hurry, or we shall be late now, sure enough.” Thereupon she threw the door to her room open, and turning to her father who was following a little behind, said: “Come father,” and reaching him a hand, led him, following her mother into the room. Taking her father’s hat, she placed it upon a table, and catching up a brush, with a few deft strokes brought his scant locks into presentable order. Meanwhile her mother, standing in front of a mirror, had taken off her gloves and was adjusting her hair and her hat to her apparent satisfaction. Kate took some manuscript from a drawer and some flowers from a vase and, as her mother turned from the glass, she fastened a rose upon the old



lady's bosom and said: "Now, let us go," and with her father on one arm and her mother on the other, they hurried along the corridor and upstairs to the chapel.

As they entered, Kate resigned the direction of her parents to an usher, and hastened over to the seats assigned to the graduating class at the right side of the platform. Her classmates were already in their places, and the audience, which filled the room to the walls, was just becoming settled. Upon the platform stood the principal with one hand upon the desk and the other nervously twisting and intertwisting his watch-guard as he glanced with anxious face here and there over the audience. In a semicircle behind him were seated the Rev. Mr. Cannon, pastor of the Presbyterian church, Judge Sheldon, county judge of an adjoining county, who was to deliver the diplomas and address the graduates, Dr. Crabtree, the leading physician and a man of local reputation as an ornithologist, and the members of the faculty: Miss Benton, Miss Hollis and Mrs. Dabney, the principal's wife. The exercises were opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Cannon, who made a long and verbose appeal for all and everything that could reasonably be included in a supplication on such an occasion. He was a little man with a disproportionately large head, which disproportion was increased by a very full beard. He spoke slowly, and with great deliberation and profundity of manner. He accompanied his utterances with great upturning of his face and upstretching of his neck, and had a way of side-shaking his head at important words and at the close of sentences.

After the prayer, there was a flutter of reanimated fans throughout the audience, and some shuffling and adjusting of chairs and the hurried entrance of a few who had lingered at the entrance, or arrived late. Music by the



seminary quartette with Kate at the piano, soon harmonized all into good order and good feeling. Then, following in orderly succession, came the essays and declamations. When these had proceeded to about the middle of the programme, a most unlooked for thing happened. A dove, pursued by a hawk, as explained later by some boys outside, darted in at an open window, and after flying about the room, alighted upon the cornice over a door. The audience was suddenly thrown into some excitement, and there was, for a few moments, a good deal of confusion and some noise. Marcia Perkins, who was at the moment reading her essay, became very nervous, not having perceived the cause of the disturbance, and in her embarrassment turned the leaves of her manuscript so fumblingly that some sheets of it slipped from her fingers and went fluttering across the platform, a few of them even out through the window. This brought her reading to an abrupt stop, and with her face like a peony, she turned first to one side and then to the other, and finally faced about toward the principal who arose, and taking her by the hand, led her toward her seat. After this interruption, the proceedings went on in regular order again to the end of the programme, when Kate delivered her valedictory with great credit to herself and no little pride to her parents, closing with these beautiful lines from Longfellow:

“Faith overleaps the confines of our reason,  
And if by faith, as in old times was said  
Women received their dead  
Raised up to life, then only for a season  
Our partings are, nor shall we wait in vain  
Until we meet again.”

Then Judge Sheldon arose and took his stand beside



a table, upon which could be seen the little bundle of parchments tied with blue and yellow ribbon, while the members of the graduating class, at a signal from the principal, ranged up with cheerful promptitude, in a line at one side of the platform fronting him. As the principal called out the names, each candidate stepped forward and received her diploma from the judge's hand, and backed into her place again with a countenance beaming with happiness and proud satisfaction.

This little ceremony finished, the graduates returned to their seats, and the judge, turning more and more toward the audience as he proceeded, delivered an address upon the influence of woman in the home, in politics and in the world's history that would have adorned a much greater occasion.

At the close of the exercises, the audience crowded with great eagerness about the graduates to bestow congratulations, and about the judge to shake his hand and to tell him that his "speech was as good as gospel."



## CHAPTER IV.

One hot afternoon about a week after commencement, John Harmon was sitting at his desk in the law office of Smith and Ramsdale when a farmer wearing a drooping, broad-brimmed straw hat, walked in through the open doorway and said: "You're Mr. Harmon, aint ye?"

"That's my name," answered Mr. Harmon.

"Waal," said the farmer, "as I wuz comin' past Doc Agenses', his boy run aout an' ast me to take this letter daown tew ye," at the same time removing his hat and taking from it a red cotton handkerchief which he carefully unfolded till he extricated an envelope, and stepping nearer, handed it to Mr. Harmon.

"Thank you—won't you take a seat?" said Mr. Harmon, motioning toward a chair as he proceeded to open the envelope.

"No, thank ye," replied the farmer, "I've got to git back's quick's I kin to git ma hay in. I broke tew knives in ma machine this mornin' an' had ta come daown to git them an' a butter ferkin, an' then I'm goin' back jist's quick's I kin git thar."

"Well," said Mr. Harmon, looking up from the note which he had glanced through, "this is fine hay weather, and I suppose you must make hay while the sun shines."

"Yes, but l'me tell ye," said the farmer, "hay aint goin' ta be this year what it was last—they aint no bottom to it; an' I notice ez I come 'ong, tha winrows er mighty thin an' far 'part. Tha weather's bin too dry," he went on, "'specially in May, an' then when we did



git some rain, it growed up tall an' made a good show, but 'twas thin, an' when ye come ta cut it, it all dries upta nothin'." With these words he had reached the door, where, turning half around, he added: "Doc's boy said they wasn't no answer, so I aint waitin' fer none."

"All right sir," said Mr. Harmon, "good-day."

"Good-day," replied the farmer, making a short nod over his shoulder as he disappeared through the doorway.

The note was an invitation from Mr. Harmon's old friend, Dr. Agens, to spend Sunday with him. The doctor lived at a little hamlet known as Cook's Corners, six miles over the hills from Plainfield, where he had tacked up his tin sign when he began to practice years before, and the only place in which it had ever been displayed.

The doctor was a short, stout man, some twelve years Mr. Harmon's senior, clean shaven and ruddy faced. He was a great lover of good tobacco, a good story and a good book. Owing to the loss of the toes of both feet, he walked with the aid of a crutch and a cane. Some years before, while making a night call in a howling storm, his horse, floundering through a great snowdrift, became caught fast in the depths, and the doctor, rolling out from his cover of buffalo robes, took a shovel from under the sleigh seat, where he always carried one on long winter rides, and shoveled the horse and his way out. While working thus in the deep snow, his feet became chilled, and after returning to the sleigh, he suffered greatly till he reached his destination, two miles farther on. There it was found that his feet were badly frozen, and subsequently all of his toes and a portion of one foot were amputated. On account of this disability, most of his time was passed in his carriage and in his office chair, but such limitation never altered his happy, genial dis-



position. He was as sympathetic as a woman, and had a heart that would not harm a fly. Among the country people to whose physical infirmities he ministered, he was highly esteemed for his professional skill, and affectionately regarded as counselor and friend in every trouble.

The fast friendship between the doctor and Mr. Harmon began when the former studied medicine under old Dr. Upham whose residence, in those days, adjoined that of the Harmons in Plainfield, and grew more steadfast as the passage of time made less apparent the difference in their ages. To Mr. Harmon's inquiring mind when a boy, there was a sort of mystery about the old doctor's office next door. Occasionally he got a glimpse of closets full of bottles, of surgical instruments and apparatus, and the specimens in jars of alcohol. The old doctor was rather gruff, at least with boys, and Johnny, as he was then called, for that reason had never obtained the greatly desired privilege of lingering within the doctor's office longer than was requisite for the discharge of an errand, till the pleasant-faced young man from Cook's Corners came there to study. Then came Johnny's opportunity also, to satisfy his curiosity, and in his daily visits to his new-found friend he soon saw and learned so much that at home he could talk of little else, and they all began to call him "doctor." The friendship thus established grew firmer as they grew older, owing to the fact that they were alike in tastes, but somewhat different in disposition. Mr. Harmon was quick and full of impulse; Dr. Agens slower and more conservative, but both alike radical in thought, with a liking for delving deep to the root of things.

The next day, Saturday, Mr. Harmon went over to the stable in the rear of the village tavern and engaged a carriage and driver to take him over to Cook's Corners.



The weather continuing very warm, he directed that the start should not be made till after sundown when driving would be more agreeable in the cooler evening. His visits to the doctor were usually made on Sunday, for no reason particularly, except, perhaps, that absence from his desk on that day would not entail the loss of an opportunity to observe practice in the office of Smith and Ramsdall, although, as a matter of fact, he might be absent a week, particularly at this season of the year, without sacrificing his opportunities as a student-at-law to any great extent.

At the appointed hour in the evening, Joe Fraker, the driver, brought the carriage around to the house, and as he drew up at the "horse-block" Mr. Harmon came through the gate with a linen duster on his arm, and seating himself in the carriage, they started off at once. For a mile or more the road was level, and the horse, coming into the cool air, fresh from the stable, pulled for a freer rein. Very soon, however, his ardor cooled as he began to climb the hills, and progress, though slower, was none the less enjoyable in the refreshing air which improved as the road led higher. It was a moonless summer night, when the starlight overhead seemed to be dissipated and lost before it reached the earth, and fields and woodland were enveloped in shadows that seemed to emanate from the ground.

Conversation, which was lively enough when they set out, languished as they drove farther into the night, until at length, they went on in silence, as if lulled by the stillness about them. They rode on in this way for some time, until, as they were passing an old farmhouse, scarcely discernible among the dark foliage that surrounded it, Joe broke the silence saying: "I've heard



tell that 'are house is haunted," motioning toward it with his whip.

"Who lives there?" inquired Mr. Harmon, as if roused from a reverie.

"Nobody," answered Joe, "there aint nobody bin livin' there fer years."

"Well," said Mr. Harmon, "I never noticed it particularly; who owns it?"

"I dunno," answered Joe, "guess 'taint worth much to nobody if people can't live in it."

"Now Joe," said Mr. Harmon, as if appealing for a truthful statement, "you don't believe in ghosts, do you?"

"Well, Mr. Harmon," replied Joe in tones so serious as to indicate that he was very much in earnest, "I dunno—I've never seen any, but I've heard tell of 'em a good deal. I know I've heard things, and seen some things I can't explain, and whether 'twas ghosts or not, I can't say."

"Tell me about it," asked Mr. Harmon in a way suggesting a wish to be amused.

"Well," began Joe, "when I lived on the Sackett farm over on th' east road, I'd bin over in th' lot one day, hoein' 'taters, an' long 'bout a little afore sundown I come over to th' house to make ready for milkin'. It's a red house, ye know, an' stands facing the road, with th' kitchen an' woodshed runnin' back to one end, an' a covered stoop along the whole side of it, an' steps at the back end. Well, I found when I got to th' house, that my wife an' th' children wasn't at home, but had prob'ly gone down to Pete Harney's, next house down the road where they used to go visitin' every little while. When they got home they told me that's where they'd bin. Well, I went into th' kitchen and walked over to th' sink to one side, where th' pump was, an' went to pumpin' myself a



drink o' water. Just as I got th' dipper full, I heard someone with heavy boots on, comin' along th' stoop to th' kitchen door, an' as I turned round th' sound o' th' steps came right in th' door and walked across th' kitchen floor right before me, an' through a door into th' next room an' stopped. I was dumfounded, fer I couldn't see a thing, although th' sun was shinin' outside, an' it was good daylight yet. I sot down th' dipper an' walked into th' room where th' sound o' th' steps'd gone, an' sir, just as I got to th' middle o' th' room, they begun again an' walked right roun' me an' out into th' kitchen again an' across to th' door, an' me followin' it, an' out on th' stoop an' along th' length on it, an' down th' steps an' off into th' grass."

"Weren't you scared?" inquired Mr. Harmon.

"Not a bit," replied Joe very emphatically. "You know a feller can stand a lot o' this ghost business in broad daylight."

"Don't you think someone played a trick on you?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"Well, I guess not," said Joe very positively, "there couldn't nobody play a trick like that."

"Did you ever have any similar experience at night?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"Yes, when we lived up on th' Harris place," began Joe again, "we used to hear lots o' noises, but we never saw anythin'."

"There's the doctor's light," broke in Mr. Harmon, as they made a turn in the road.

"Sure enough," said Joe, "guess he's expectin' ye. Why!" he resumed, "some nights after we'd gone to bed, we used to hear th' awfulest slammin' an' crashin' an' bangin' upstairs, as if th' roof was a-comin' in. We often used to get up an' take a candle an' go upstairs



where th' children slept, fearin' somethin'd happened to them, but there they'd be, all asleep an' quiet, as though nothin'd happened, an' everythin' in its place. We got so, after a while, we didn't pay no 'tention to it."

"For how long did you continue to hear those noises?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"Oh, as long," answered Joe, "as we lived there."

"What do you think caused them?" he queried.

"I dunno," replied Joe. "I know there was no one but me an' ma wife an' th' children in th' house, an' all on us together couldn't begin to make th' racket we heard. Why! sometimes it was like a crash o' thunder."

"You're sure it wasn't?" queried Mr. Harmon.

"Well," Joe answered, slightly nettled, "it couldn't thunder every night, an' when th' sky was clear an' th' stars an' moon shinin'."

"Very true," said Mr. Harmon, as if to compensate for his question, and then, after a moment's silence: "There is more in this world than is printed in books."

"That's true as you live," added Joe, with assuring positiveness.

At this, they arrived in front of the doctor's, whereupon Mr. Harmon leaped out of the carriage just as the front door opened and Mrs. Agens and Ralph, their son, came out on the porch.

"Is that you, Mr. Harmon?" called out Mrs. Agens.

"Yes," he answered, "a little late but pardonable, I hope, in such weather."

Joe was turning the horse around for the homeward journey and Mr. Harmon bade him good-night. "Good-night," answered Joe as he drove away in the darkness,

Mr. Harmon took off his duster, and after shaking it, threw it across his arm and went within where cordial welcome awaited him.



## CHAPTER V.

When Mr. Harmon came downstairs the next morning, he observed that the house was very quiet, and seeing no one about the rooms, he strolled along the hall and through the open doorway to the porch, where he discovered Mrs. Agens in the front yard among the flower-beds.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Agens," he called out, "I see you are an early worshiper at the altar of the beautiful."

"Oh, good-morning, Mr. Harmon," she answered, rising up from a bed of pansies and turning toward him with a large bouquet in her hand. "Yes, I'm a regular devotee here, late and early." Then, walking around the flower-beds and out to the walk in front of the steps, she said: "This spring I took it upon myself to look after these flowers," motioning toward the flower-beds with her disengaged hand, "and I've been out here early and late digging and weeding and watering, sometimes till my back is ready to break in two. The doctor often scolds about it, but I do so like to see them looking nice, and I guess the extra work'll do me more good than harm."

"Where is the doctor?" asked Mr. Harmon, going down the steps and bending over to inhale the fragrance of the flowers which Mrs. Agens held up to him.

"The doctor hasn't got up yet," she replied, "he was away on a call last night from one o'clock till five this morning, and he's sleeping yet." Then mounting the steps, she continued: "but come in—we won't wait for him, we'll have breakfast and he can have his when he gets up by and by."



As he accompanied her, Mr. Harmon said: "That is the real hardship of a doctor's life; I'm sure it would never do for me, for I must have my sleep regularly, whatever else happens."

Entering the dining-room, Mrs. Agens placed the flowers in a blue pitcher standing upon the breakfast table which did service as a flower-vase, and assigning Mr. Harmon a chair, they seated themselves at the table. As the maid came in to serve the meal, Mrs. Agens said to her: "Sara, go and call Ralph to breakfast, I think he is out in the barn with Jerry."

"No he isn't," replied Sara, "that Bronson boy came after him about half an hour ago to have him go over to his house to breakfast. They're going to the Sunday School picnic—Ralph said you promised him he could go early."

"Well, I believe I did," said Mrs. Agens, "but he hadn't ought to go without his breakfast." Then addressing herself to Mr. Harmon, she continued: "The boys are going to have charge of the lemonade stand, and they are so excited about it they can't wait for the time to come, I suppose."

After breakfast, Mrs. Agens took from a pile of papers and magazines on a stand near the window, the latest copy of the Plainfield Farmer, and handing it to Mr. Harmon, told him to make his own selection of a comfortable corner, while she looked after the morning housework.

The doctor's office was attached to the house on the east side, and was reached by a covered porch or way, extending from the dining-room door back to the office. Mr. Harmon walked along this way, paper in hand, and through the office to a sort of broad platform, the entire width of the building on the south side, and roofed over



by the thick branches of a nearby apple tree. The platform had a railing along the sides, and a small table stood in the center and easy armchairs about. This was the doctor's favorite place in summer weather, where he read, and smoked, and often dozed and dreamed. This retreat was known to Mr. Harmon, for here he had passed many pleasant Sunday afternoons with the doctor, and here he would await him now.

Seating himself in a chair with his back toward the railing and the light, he looked over the news items in the Farmer, quite all his personal knowledge already, and had nearly finished a column article on "An Improved Method of Hiving Bees," when he heard the sound of the doctor's crutch and cane coming along the covered way from the house.

"Aha, ha," said the doctor, coming through the office to where Mr. Harmon was sitting, "I knew where to find you."

"Hello, Doctor," answered Mr. Harmon, "how are you this morning?"

"Fine as a flute," answered the doctor, seating himself in his chair, and then repeating it: "fine as a flute, my boy." Laying his crutch and cane across the table, he went on: "When I awoke a few minutes ago and looked out at this beautiful sky and inhaled the pure, fresh air of this new day, and considered for a moment the light and beauty and worth of it all, and of how powerless man is in all his boasted cunning and strength to produce the merest fragment of it even for a moment, I felt, as I often do, so impressed by the power, the wisdom and the goodness behind it all that, in my heart, I worshiped in gratitude and admiration whatever and wherever the cause may be."

Before he could proceed further, as he seemed about



to do, Mrs. Agens came bustling through the office, asking as she appeared: "Doctor, what will you have for breakfast?"

"Oh," answered the doctor, "tell Sara to bring me a dish of strawberries and a chunk of that Mother Hubbard cake and a cup of milk—that's all the breakfast I want."

"Won't you have some scrambled eggs and hashbrown potatoes?" she inquired.

"No, no," answered the doctor, shaking his head vigorously in pseudo-impatience, "the berries and cake are all I want now."

Mrs. Agens started to go, but turned back at the office door and asked: "Sha'nt I bring you out a piece of custard pie?"

"Oh, bless you, no," said the doctor, throwing his head back on his chair, and then quickly raising it again, he added: "All right, bring it along for John, and we'll lunch together." Mrs. Agens darted off without another word.

Mr. Harmon, who had been looking on in smiling silence, folded the newspaper over and over into a small bundle as he said: "Doctor, if I should marry a wife like that, I'd consider myself the lucky one in a thousand."

The doctor chuckled a pleased little laugh and said: "Well, you go and hook up to that Barry girl and I guess you'll find your luck is all right." Then he chuckled again as he looked at Mr. Harmon with merry mischief in his eyes.

Mr. Harmon smiled, and tilting back his chair against the railing, said: "Now Doctor, don't give advice that you are not prepared to be responsible for."

"Oh," said the doctor, arching his eyebrows and assuming a serious look; "I more than mean it." Whether



he would have said more is unknown, for at that moment Mrs. Agens, accompanied by Sara, came through the office, carrying a generous piece of pie on a plate, while Sara bore the strawberries and cake and milk on a tray for the doctor. Mrs. Agens, holding the plate in one hand, took with the other the doctor's crutch and cane, and placed them at one side against the railing, and then drawing the small table up between Mr. Harmon and the doctor, she placed upon it the plate containing the pie in front of Mr. Harmon, and taking the tray from Sara, she lifted from it a napkin and a fork, which she laid beside Mr. Harmon's plate, and then placed the tray in front of the doctor. "There," she said in a tone of satisfaction, "now, if there's anything else you'd like, I'll get it for you."

"All we want now, Myra," said the doctor in assuring tones, "is to be left to ourselves."

As Mr. Harmon spread his napkin over his knee, he said, looking at his piece of pie: "This looks like a section from a prize-winner at the county fair."

"Well, I hope it is good," said Mrs. Agens, with a pleased smile, "it's fresh out of the oven with only time to cool, and if it's good at all, it's good while it's fresh."

The doctor had begun tasting his berries, but laying down his spoon and leaning back in his chair, he said: "Before you go, Myra, I wish you'd lay my sticks near my chair—you know I always want them where I can put my hand on them." Mrs. Agens put the crutch and the cane down at the right side of his chair, and then, rearranging the dishes on the tray as more convenient for his use, she said: "Now, if you want anything, call to me," and followed Sara through the office, back to the house.

After partaking of their delicacies a few moments in



silence, Mr. Harmon asked: "Was your ride last night a very long one?"

"Oh, no," replied the doctor, "some two miles or so, but it was one of those cases that often takes time—the ushering into the world, of a human being. Do you know," continued the doctor with a sort of half-apologetic smile, "that while waiting on such cases I always think of the possibility of privilege and honor that may be mine in attending at the entrance into this world of one who, however lowly and humble the surroundings are, may some day lead the world—a Newton, a Darwin, a Napoleon or a Mozart. Is it not as possible as it is entertaining to think so? Surely," he went on, answering his query, "how little, though, I dare say, did any one of the doctors attending at the birth of those just mentioned, dream that the babe which he held in his arms was one day to receive the homage of kings, and its name to shine in imperishable glory in all the world's history."

"That's all very true, doctor," said Mr. Harmon, "but I am inclined to the opinion that doctors, as a rule, are much oftener figuring out when and where the fee is coming from than what the baby may be or become in the future. Was it not Washington Irving who said: 'Genius loves to nestle her offspring in strange places?' Yes," he went on without a stop, "I believe it was, and in reading the biographies of great men, I am often reminded of the truth of it."

"Genius," said the doctor, leaving his spoon in the berries and reclining back in his chair, "this something called genius, is hard to define and harder yet to account for—did you ever think of it? We all assume to know," he went on, "what constitutes genius, although your exact definition may not agree with mine or that of any other. Then again, whence is it; how do you account



for it? How do you account for the genius born of an ignorant clod of a mother and a flat-pated cobbler for a father?"

"Reincarnation explains that," answered Mr. Harmon.

"Oh, bosh!" exclaimed the doctor, resuming his berries.

"Really," continued Mr. Harmon, as he finished his pie and laid his napkin upon the table, "I am prepared to admit certain of the propositions laid down by reincarnationists, for instance, when they assert that, 'what begins in time must end in time,' how is one to reasonably gainsay it?"

"Well," replied the doctor without looking up from his dish, "you might just as well end in time as to lose your identity in reincarnation."

"Oh, no," returned Mr. Harmon, "such loss is only temporary, for finally, when in the full fruition of all experience, one arrives at perfection, he awakens, so to speak, to a realization of identity persisting through it all."

"Now John," asked the doctor, tapping the side of his dish with his spoon, "without going further into the philosophy of your reincarnation theory, let me ask you one question: if we lose identity at death or reincarnation, what about the ties of interest and affection between parent and child, husband and wife, friend and friend, made binding by the conditions of this life, and ever cherished for the lost in the hope, aye, the belief inherent in the heart of all peoples, that beyond the grave is reunion, restoration?"

"Oh, don't call it my theory," said Mr. Harmon, evading the question, "I am only setting forth the propositions laid down as self-evident by reincarnationists."

The doctor drank his cup of milk, and pushing back his chair from the table, said: "The popularity and



spread of reincarnation simply shows that there is some want, some yearning of the heart and mind which the Christian religion does not satisfy, and which through \_\_\_\_\_”

A cough by some one within the office interrupted him, and stopping, he hitched his chair about to face the office door and said: “Come in,” whereupon a frail-looking elderly woman dressed plainly in black, appeared in the doorway. “Mrs. Emory, take a seat,” said the doctor, motioning Mr. Harmon, who had arisen to go, back to his chair. “How are you to-day?” asked the doctor, as she seated herself and, before she could answer, asking again: “Have you been waiting long in the office—I did not notice when you came in.”

“Oh, not a very great while,” answered the woman, “but I saw you were here, and so I waited.”

“Well, you probably heard,” said the doctor, winking slyly at Mr. Harmon, “our argument over reincarnation.”

“I don’t know anything about reincarnation,” replied the old woman, “and I don’t know as I should want to.”

“Well,” said the doctor, looking at Mr. Harmon and then at the old woman, “I don’t pretend to know very much about it myself, but from what I do know, I can say that the moral principle in it—its morality seems to be even better than what we hear in some of the pulpits.”

“Waal,” returned the woman, “morality is good enough, as far as it goes, but as for me, give me the Bible.” Having delivered this, she straightened up in her chair with the air of having made unanswerable statement.

The doctor turned to Mr. Harmon and said laughingly: “Mrs. Emory and I have some pretty lively tilts on religion once in awhile, but she generally gets the better of me.” At this, the severe lines in her face re-



laxed into a pleased smile, but before she could say anything, the doctor asked: "Well, Mrs. Emory, what is the trouble to-day?"

"Oh, it's my dyspepsy, doctor, as usual—that pain and heartburn, and I come over arfter some of them powders that allus help me so."

"Aha!" exclaimed the doctor, picking up his crutch and cane, "we'll make that lose its identity forthwith."

The old lady looked at the doctor inquiringly for a moment and seemed about to say something, but he appeared so occupied in getting upon his feet that, after glancing at Mr. Harmon, she settled back in her chair in silence. In a few minutes the doctor called to her from within, and she arose and went into the office where he was heard giving directions and instructions, after which, she took her departure, and the doctor, smoking his pipe, returned to his chair and laid his crutch and cane on the floor beside it.

"That woman," said the doctor, taking his pipe in his hand and watching the blue smoke ascending from the bowl like a string in the air, "is a good example of the kind of simple, trusting, confident Christian people of fifty years ago. They were happy in their belief and confident in what they expected, not what they understood. I meet such people once in a while, but, like foxes, they're getting scarcer. I almost covet their spiritual contentment and serene assurance, but, you know, there's got to be an awakening some day. I deal with them a good deal as you would with children—go far enough for amusement but never to offend, or hurt their feelings. I was disappointed in not being able to start her a-going just now, so that you might see a good specimen of all-sufficient faith, but your presence overawed her, I guess." He gave a little chuckle as he said this, and replacing his



pipe in his mouth, began smoking vigorously, as if to make up for lost time.

"I could see you were up to something," said Mr. Harmon. "She looked so frail I only thought of that, and possibly the display of some symptom."

"Yes, she's frail," said the doctor, "and the cause of her frailty is easily explained. She is suffering what, in the books, is called malassimilation, she does not derive sufficient nutriment from what she eats and consequently her system is starving and wasting while she is overeating."

"How is that?" inquired Mr. Harmon.

"Well," began the doctor, after making two or three preparatory puffs, "she eats too much, in addition to eating what she should not, her stomach becomes overloaded, overworked, and proper digestion failing, fermentation sets in, which not only destroys the nutritive properties of the food taken, but also acts as an irritant upon stomach and bowels. She suffers some pain or discomfort and is relieved by a few doses checking the fermentation process and unloading the intestinal tract. In a day or two, she is again overeating and the same process is gone over again and again. All this time her system does not get its proper supply of nourishment through blood enriched by good digestion, and she grows thin and frail. The same over-indulgence in other cases results in too much avoirdupois. With digestion like an ostrich, they assimilate well and grow fat, then fatter, until the fat is a burden or a hindrance or a deformity, and then they take anti-fat, and obesity pills, and diet, and even fast, perhaps, for a little while, but that is not to their liking and they soon give it up as of no use and go back to their feeding."



"Such people," said Mr. Harmon with marked positiveness, "do not deserve pity."

"Well," said the doctor, taking a puff or two to keep his pipe alive, "as to that, there are very few who do, for overeating is universal and the source of four fifths of all sickness. Were it not for this overeating which is simply animal selfishness, there would be very little for doctors to do."

"What should be taken as a rule or guide?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"Appetite controlled by reason," answered the doctor promptly. "As a matter of fact, we do not wait on appetite, but eat because it is mealtime. Some people in good health are never hungry because they habitually anticipate hunger by eating on the hour, and there is no need of hunger, no use for it. When an organ or a function is not used or exercised, it begins to atrophy, to disappear, and in time is eliminated as no longer required in the economy, just as we are eliminating the faculty of smelling, and the fifth or little toe on each foot. I tell my patients as a rule, to eat to live, not live to eat, and when they get sick or indisposed, to fast for twenty-four or forty-eight hours and then, if they do not feel better, they may send for me."

"Do they follow that advice?" inquired Mr. Harmon with a knowing look.

"Oh, no," replied the doctor, shaking his head, "self-love or love of self indulgence is too strong and overrules all other rules. Even when sick, instead of allowing the embarrassed organs rest or lighter work as Nature intended by withdrawing desire or tolerance of food, they continue the feeding by having recourse to every kind of pap or delicacy that the mind can devise to tempt and overcome the precaution of Nature."



Here Sara appeared and said dinner was ready.

"I fear our topic has not been very appetizing," said the doctor, reaching down for his crutch and cane.

"I agree with you so fully, doctor," said Mr. Harmon, "that I believe we might part with a good deal of appetite and yet have enough left."

"Well," returned the doctor with a chuckle, after getting to his feet and starting for the door, "come along and let us see how much you've got left."



## CHAPTER VI.

Late in the afternoon the doctor suggested that Mr. Harmon accompany him on his ride in making a few calls that were promised for that day, "and," added the doctor, "in coming back I'll drive around by the mill road and leave you at Mr. Barry's where I know, of course, you are due to-night."

"All right," said Mr. Harmon, "I should like to go with you very much."

"And you would like better to be left," said the doctor with a chuckle, "when we get to the right place."

In response to the doctor's call, Jerry, the stable boy, brought the carriage out, and the doctor and Mr. Harmon set off as the rays of the declining sun were losing their fires, and the narrowing shadows of the trees were stretching eastward.

At the first stop made, the doctor went in to see the little stranger whom he had welcomed the night before. The baby's brother and sister, both under ten years of age, lingered at the gate to talk with Mr. Harmon, who remained sitting in the carriage.

"I know the doctor's horse's name," said the little boy sitting on the lower frame of the gate and pushing himself back and forth with his feet.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"Dan," he answered, checking his back and forth journey to see how the announcement was taken.

Mr. Harmon remaining quite unaffected, he resumed his movement as he said: "My pa's got three horses."

"He has !" said Mr. Harmon, feigning wonder.



"Yes," continued the little fellow, "and a colt."

"I suppose the colt belongs to you, doesn't it?" inquired Mr. Harmon.

"Yes," he answered, getting up from the gate and putting his hands in his pockets, as he looked down at his legs as if to take note of his stature; "pa says he's going to be mine when I grow up to be a big boy."

The little girl was standing near the fence listening and watching them both, and Mr. Harmon, turning to her, asked: "And what have you got, little girl?"

"I've got a dolly," she answered, putting her arm through the fence and looking at her fingers as they reappeared two pickets beyond.

"Haven't you got a new baby in the house?" he asked.

The little girl made a nod of assent that bumped her chin against her breast, and a look of pride beamed from her pretty face.

"What is the baby's name?" he continued.

"'Taint got any," she answered timidly.

"The doctor brought it," put in the boy, stepping around more directly facing Mr. Harmon, "in that black box under the seat."

"Where do you suppose he got it?" asked Mr. Harmon.

"I dunno," said the boy; "guess he found it somewhere."

Hereupon the doctor came out and the boy held the gate opened back to the widest inch for him to pass through.

"Eddie, you're a good boy," said the doctor, pushing his medicine chest under the seat. Noticing the little girl as he seated himself in the carriage, he held back his horse, wont to start as soon as it felt his hand on the reins, and asked: "Florrie, how do you like that baby—do you want me to take it away to-day?"



"No," she said, shaking her head and, as a look of anxiety suddenly appeared in her face, she turned and ran through the gate toward the house with her brother following close behind. The doctor chuckled as he looked after them, and then drove on again.

"I asked the little boy," said Mr. Harmon, "where he supposed you got the baby, and he said you brought it in your box, and he guessed you found it somewhere."

The doctor laughed and said: "You're lucky that he did not take a notion to be your inquisitor and ask questions that would confound even you, young Mr. Lawyer. How limited, after all, is human knowledge, when even little children may ask questions that no one can answer, that have never been answered and never will be! Whether we look beyond the cradle or beyond the grave, all is impenetrable mystery. As you know, in olden times people who were not so occupied in money-getting as we are, reasoned long on these questions, and reasoned well, but finished, after all, where they began. They occupied themselves more with the question of a hereafter, some of them, as you know, likening the body to a musical instrument and the soul to the sound produced by it. When the instrument was destroyed, the sound could no longer be produced nor exist. Others, that the soul, upon the death of the body, sought habitation in other bodies, sometimes in lower animals and even plants, and persisted, because indestructible, in some form of animated matter. But all such speculation did not produce even a reasonable hypothesis, and to-day, in this nineteenth century, we are all yet without a solution, without a demonstrable conclusion as to whence we came or whither we are going. I have about come to the conclusion that it was not in the purpose of the great designer that we should know these things. If it was, some data, some



means, some provision would have been made just as provision was made in the deposits of coal, iron and gold for the needs which to-day are being supplied by them. Whatever is requisite for our condition and relations in this life seems to have been anticipated and wisely provided. A conception of mathematical truths, indispensable to all mechanical progress and commercial relations is within the powers of the minds of all peoples all the world over,  $2 \times 2 = 4$  is intelligible in every corner of the earth. The designer foresaw that to be necessary, and so the plan included it. I infer, therefore, that if a knowledge of our hereafter was even as requisite or necessary to our well-doing or well-being as such things are, that the same wise designer would have laid the means to that knowledge within our reach, just as he did the coal and mineral and precious gems under a stone for our finding."

"The world, then, according to your reasoning," said Mr. Harmon, "is good enough just as it is; its lack of faith and its immorality not so great evils as the preacher would have us believe."

"Morals," returned the doctor, "is a matter of law, and law, as you know, is a matter of procedure. Morals and religion are in no wise necessarily connected, they are usually associated together just as are ham and eggs, that's all. A person may be irreligious and yet strictly moral, his morality the result of his regard for justice, equity. On the other hand, one may be religious and immoral, even consistently with his religion."

Here the doctor drew up at a cottage by the roadside, and went in to see a patient. When he returned, Mr. Harmon noticed a saddened look in his eyes, and asked: "A serious case there, doctor?"

"Yes," he answered, "before to-morrow's sun he will



have solved the great riddle, and know more, if he knows anything, than you or I or all the world's wisest, poor old wood-chopper as he is. He has been dying of consumption for six months past—a hopeless case, but now, within six hours, the poor old fellow will find release and rest. If there is a future, then his simple honest life will secure him peace: if death ends all, then he will rest in oblivion. If there is no future, there can be no sense of loss, for without consciousness we can not be aware that we ever had an existence.”

“Do you think,” inquired Mr. Harmon, “that man will ever wholly dispense with religion?”

“No, I do not,” answered the doctor, “but as he advances it will become simpler through the elimination of all that relates to creed, dogma and ceremony. It will be reduced to something as simple as: to so live as to be a good neighbor and a good citizen. That embraces every duty and obligation of life and, when you consider what it means and all it includes, you will agree that it is all-sufficient.”

When they reached the mill road, the light had faded from the western sky and the fireflies were twinkling in the deepening gloom over the meadows. The road skirted the valley of the river upon which, a mile above, was the great dam and the old gristmill which gave to the road its name. The doctor's horse, at a good pace, soon brought them to the Barry farm, where Mr. Harmon alighted, and, bidding the doctor good-night, walked along the driveway leading up to the house, a large, substantial old structure, painted red with white “trimmings.” It stood well back on the east side of the road, running north and south, with great elms shading the wide lawn and arching over the drive, beyond which, on the south side, was a dense old orchard, almost concealing the great barns and



stables behind it, at which the drive terminated. Over the front door of the house was a sort of projecting hood, supported by two turned posts with a seat built in on each side. In later years a porch had been added on the south side facing the drive and extending along the front of the sitting-room and kitchen, which, by the ample growth of a Virginia creeper, had become so latticed in that even at midday it was as secluded from the sun's rays as the inner rooms of the house.

As Mr. Harmon drew nearer, the sound of voices reached him through this leafy barrier of the porch, and a moment later Kate tripped down the steps and came forward to meet him. She was dressed in white, with a moss rose, Mr. Harmon's favorite flower, in her hair. Upon meeting him, she extended her hand, saying: "Good-evening, Mr. Harmon, we were just speaking of you when I heard a carriage stop, and looking out, I was sure I recognized you coming up the drive."

"Good-evening," he returned, "talking about me, eh! Now, how did I happen to be the honored subject of your conversation?"

"Oh, we were talking of Judge Sheldon's address at Commencement," answered Kate, "and I said I thought he was a very fine speaker, but father declared he could not 'hold a candle to Mr. Harmon.'"

Mr. Harmon smiled as he said: "I see that I established my reputation with your father when I made that speech over at the Flat Rock schoolhouse a week before the election last fall, for he speaks of it nearly every time I meet him."

"Yes indeed," said Kate, "I often heard him speak of that, and he referred to it just now. But, come in, I want to introduce you to Father McNally."



"Who is Father McNally?" he inquired halting suddenly.

"Why, he is our priest," answered Kate. "He said mass to-day at Plainfield, and we invited him over to take dinner and rest with us till the cool evening for his ride home—he lives at High Falls."

As they entered the porch, Kate introduced Mr. Harmon, and when they were seated, Mr. Barry added: "Misther Harmon is goin' to be a loiyer—he's shtudyin' law with Smith and Ramsdall, over in Plainfield, two o' th' shmartest loiyers in th' county."

"Ah," said Father McNally, "the law is a noble profession. I have always had great liking for the law. If I had been left to my own choice when I was a young man, I would have studied law, but my education was in the hands of an uncle who sent me to Louvain to be educated for the priesthood."

"How long have you been in the ministry, Mr. McNally?" inquired Mr. Harmon.

"I was ordained when I was twenty-two—twenty-four years ago next Easter," said the priest in a depreciating tone.

"There's no loiyer in the wurled that has th' honor a priest has," put in Mr. Barry, as if to counter the implied regret in the priest's words, which he evidently did not like.

"And besides," added Mr. Harmon, "ministers are not sent, in the hereafter, where all lawyers are supposed to go."

At this they all laughed, and the priest said: "'Man proposes but God disposes.' The more I see of life, the more I dwell on the truth in Shakespeare's line: 'there is a destiny that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.'"



“Why, Father McNally!” exclaimed Kate, “do you believe in predestination?”

“Oh no, not as such,” he replied, “but I believe that the directing power of God, through the dispensation of His grace, leads us often through ways not of our choice or seeking.” Then, as if to divert from the subject, he drew a cigar-case from his pocket and extended it to Mr. Harmon, as he asked: “Do you smoke, Mr. Harmon?”

“No, thank you,” he answered, “I have never been able to master tobacco, although in many attempts to do so, it has easily mastered me.”

“Well,” almost sighed the priest as he drew a cigar from the case and proceeded to light it, “tobacco is a great solace.

‘Brother of Bacchus, later born,  
The old world was sure forlorn  
Wanting thee.’”

As he quoted these lines the clock in the dining-room struck eight, whereupon, looking at his watch, he said: “That is the second time I have been reminded that I must go. Mr. Barry, will you tell Andy to hitch up my horse right away?”

“Don’t be in a hurry, Father McNally,” suggested the old man, and then rising to his feet, he added: “but I know ye have a long journey before ye.”

At the striking of the clock, Mrs. Barry had gone into the sitting-room and lighted the lamp. As her husband approached the door to call Andy, she said: “Shtay theyre father, I’ll tell ’im,” turning towards the kitchen. Before resuming his seat, Mr. Barry stepped over to the leafy entrance and looking out, said. “Ye betther take the pike back, Father McNally, for it’s quite dark, an’ it’s th’ safest even if it’s a mile or two longer.”



"Oh yes, I shall take no chances," replied the priest, "although, for that matter, my horse is very sure-footed, and a trusty animal in the dark. When I can not see the road clearly, I give him the rein and feel safer than if I undertook to guide him."

"Do you drive often in the night?" inquired Mr. Harmon.

"Oh yes," he replied, "sick calls often take me out at night, and sometimes for long distances."

"Then you share with the doctor the undesirable part of his profession, the night call?" queried Mr. Harmon.

"Yes, but the really undesirable feature of my life is its solitariness," said the priest with something of bitterness in the tone in which he uttered the last word. "To one fond of companionship, the isolation of a priest's life is a sort of living tomb."

Kate, who had never before heard the priest give utterance to such sentiment, was quite shocked. At this moment, however, Andy brought the horse up in front of the steps, and, after taking his leave and lighting anew his cigar, the priest drove away into the night.

A few minutes after the priest had gone, Mrs. Barry, who had entered the front part of the house to lock the hall door, returned to the sitting-room holding up both hands, in one of which was the priest's breviary, as she exclaimed: "They're now, Father McNally's forgot 'is breevery!"

"'Pon me word," ejaculated Mr. Barry, slapping his knee.

"Why, mother, are you sure?" asked Kate as she went into the sitting-room. Taking the book in her hand, she added, as she looked at the unfamiliar red and black print of the volume, "sure enough; why, how disappointed he'll be when he misses it."



“Here, Andy,” called out Mr. Barry, “throw yer leg over Pete an’ see if ye can’t catch ’im—quick, now!”

As soon as the horse could be bridled, Andy mounted him “bare-back” and was off after the priest, but shortly returned, saying: “I wint as far as the fork o’ the road near the stone bridge, but I didn’t know which one he took, an’ so I thought I might as well come back.”

“Didn’t ye hear ’im say he’d keep th’ pike?” demanded Mr. Barry with some impatience.

“What’re ye talkin’ about?” said Mrs. Barry, giving her husband a little push on the arm, “how’d he know—wasn’t he beyant in th’ barn, man?”

“Well,” said Mr. Barry, as he took the book and carefully placed it on the mantel, “he’ll be back afther it, I’ll wager, before he goes very far.”

As a matter of fact, the book rested on the mantel a week before it was called for, to the increasing daily wonderment of the household. At the end of that time a messenger came for it from the priest, who happened to be on a “sick call” at a house a few miles distant.

Father McNally was about forty-five years of age, and of medium stature. He was a fine specimen physically of robust manhood, broad-shouldered, full-chested, and of erect and dignified carriage. His head was large and well-formed, and his features classical in outline. His hair, jet-black and of silky fineness, was worn rather long in wavy curls. His forehead was broad and high, his eyes so dark blue as at times to seem black, his nose Grecian, his mouth well-formed and supported by a strong chin. His face was what might be called square, and its expression kind and benevolent. His complexion was as fair as a maiden’s, with a rose flush on his cheeks that a maiden might envy. His teeth were perfect, and when he smiled, dimples formed in his cheeks out of all com-



port with a sacerdotal face. His voice was soft, rich and musical, and his manner easy, graceful and dignified. As a preacher, his eloquence was the pride of all his parishioners. It was the lecture platform, however, with its freedom from ecclesiastical limitations, that gave to his eloquence of voice and gesture the opportunity it required for its full expression, and which won for him his popular reputation as an orator. He was a finished scholar, a fine writer—a man of more than average gifts and accomplishments. He was very fond of society, of music and the arts. He showed marked preference for people outside his own church, and when among them, an opportunity was afforded to see the man as he would be. On such occasions his manner was more after the form of people of the world, and he made no hesitancy in expressing his discontent over the restrictions his calling laid upon his life and conduct, as was exemplified at the Barry household, where the presence of John Harmon alone was sufficient to lead him to forget his other listeners in the freer atmosphere with which he always endowed the society of non-Catholics. There were well-founded reports that at not infrequent times, he indulged altogether too freely in wine, and even appeared at the bedside of dying parishioners, on more than one occasion, in a maudlin condition to administer the last sacrament. But worst of all, no little scandal had been growing from reports of his conduct toward certain of the fair sex, even among his own people. These reports included also, his relations with his housekeeper, a buxom maiden whose family resided in one of his parishes, and were finally so widely known and believed, that they were working sad havoc among his people,



## CHAPTER VII.

The Catholics of Plainfield had no church structure of their own and services, therefore, were held in the town hall, hired for the occasion once in two weeks. The attending priest, Father McNally, visited the place regularly enough, but the confessions heard, and mass said, he returned to his residence at High Falls, and the Catholics of Plainfield were left to their cows and crops for another two weeks. During the preceding five years, there had been a good deal of desultory talk among the people concerning their need of a suitable church building of their own, but the priest, failing to show interest in the matter, no action was taken, and the aspiration of the people failed, therefore, to materialize.

Although Plainfield was the center of a rich agricultural district, its population was not as large as that of High Falls, eighteen miles distant, in the same county, which place, though founded later, owing to its excellent water power, had developed mills and manufacturies thereby increasing growth and population. The Catholic church and rectory at that place, situated on one of the principal streets, were quite imposing and well established, and the incumbent priest was regularly assigned to that place by the bishop, with Plainfield to the north as a mission.

As time went by, rumors affecting the priest's conduct multiplied, and were so often sustained by observation by the people themselves, even in and about Plainfield, that many neglected to attend mass or other religious duties, and sentiment against the priest was becoming



very bitter. In some way the condition of affairs at length reached the bishop, and one Sunday, quite two months following the occasion of Father McNally's call at the Barry homestead, he was at the town hall in Plainfield on the appointed day to say mass. He had already said "early mass" at High Falls that morning, before leaving for the mission church, and was, therefore, to say "late mass" at Plainfield at eleven o'clock. At that hour the people who had already arrived were in their seats in the little town hall, and Johnny Feeny, the "altar boy," had "dressed" the improvised altar; the cards and candlesticks were in their places, as were also the chalice and cruets, and, there being no rectory room, the priest's chasuble and stole were ready on one corner of the altar. Father McNally had donned his cassock, and was about to put on his surplice, when some one in the entry beckoned to Johnny Feeny, who had just lighted the candles. In a moment Johnny returned and whispered something in Father McNally's ear, whereupon the priest stepped down from the platform and disappeared in the entry.

Ten minutes later another priest, robed in his cassock, an entire stranger to the congregation, came from the entry, and mounting the platform, took up the preparations for mass where Father McNally had left them. At this, there was great craning of necks, joining of heads, and whispered excitement among the people. Johnny Feeny, resuming his service, took from the large handbag, in which the priest conveyed the articles for the altar from place to place, the bottle in which was carried the sacramental wine and placed it at a corner of the altar in order for the priest to fill the cruet. As the stranger priest proceeded to do this, he was seen to pause, and, after a moment's hesitation, turning about to the people, he



stated that there would be no mass on that day, inasmuch as there was no wine at hand. So astonished were the people, that only after Johnny Feeny had begun to re-pack the linen, cards and candlesticks in the hand-bag, and the priest to don his street clothes, did they begin to leave their seats and go outside to ask, each his neighbor, what it all meant. As was learned from Johnny Feeny later, the bottle designed for carrying the wine was well supplied, but it contained whisky instead of wine. And the question unsettled in the minds of the people to this day is: if Father McNally had not been interfered with, would the kind of liquor, with which he had supplied the wine bottle, have been the least obstacle to proceeding with the mass!

By eager and diligent inquiry, the congregation learned that the new priest, Father Logan, had been sent by the bishop to succeed Father McNally, with express instructions to relieve him "*statim; nulla re intercedente*," hence the abruptness of the transfer.

Father McNally disappeared at once, presumably to report to his bishop. The last sight of him, by the congregation of Plainfield, was when he passed from the altar, at which he was preparing for mass, through the door into the entry, and no one ever after saw or heard of him in all that side of the diocese.

His successor, Father Logan, was about thirty years of age, slightly under medium stature, dark complexioned and thickset. His large, square head was somewhat flattened at the top, his ears projecting, and his hair and beard black, thick and coarse. His forehead was low, with a great transverse wrinkle in the middle of it, and heavy eyebrows overshadowed a pair of cold, cunning gray eyes peeping at the world through half-opened eyelids. His mouth was large, his chin and lower face full



and sensuous, and his neck thick and short. His voice was coarse and inflexible, and the expression of his face sullen and repelling. His carriage was stiffly erect, and his movements clumsy. He wore a Roman collar and high silk hat which, together with a long black frock coat, gave him a very clerical appearance and impressed the people accordingly, because in so marked contrast with the white shirt front and necktie, soft hat and sack coat which Father McNally wore. This clerical appearance was sustained by a reserved and distant manner, the very opposite of Father McNally's genial affability, but the people, having lost confidence and dutiful regard for their old pastor, were prepared to see his better in any one succeeding him, who presented any indications to sustain them in the loyalty and support which they were always ready to bestow.

For some time, the congregation remained in front of the town hall discussing in little groups the sudden and wholly unlooked-for event, with all the interest and excitement which the occasion aroused in the minds of people in whom devotion to their priest is equal, quite, to their devotion to their religion. With all his faults, Father McNally was still loved for his kind, genial disposition by a great many, and admired by all for his rare abilities, therefore now, as they realized that he was so suddenly and irrevocably removed from them, his shortcomings were lost sight of in the general sense of bereavement.

"Ah, thin, he was th' fine priest," said one.

"He wuz th' man could preach th' fine sermon," said another.

"Well, I wish 'im good look wherever he goes," said a third, and so it went; not a word of censure nor of



satisfaction, even by those who, an hour before, were most ready to denounce him.

While the people were still in front of the hall, Johnny Feeny, who had accompanied the "new priest" to the tavern, was seen driving back up the street in a carriage, and, as he drew up in front of the hall, he became at once the center of an interested group of questioners.

"Did you see Father McNally?" was the first question.

"No, I did not," answered Johnny. "I guess he's gone for good."

Johnny was a weazened little fellow of twenty odd years, brusque and officious in manner. He had grown up in the village and was known by every one as "Johnny Feeny," a name which the coming of man's estate in no wise altered. He was a clerk in one of the village stores, and the self-constituted representative of the Catholics in all affairs appertaining to the church. He "served mass" whenever the service was rendered in Plainfield, looked after the hall and rendered the priest any needed assistance, all without commission or consideration.

"Is this th' new priest's horse?" inquired one.

"No, it's a livery," answered Johnny, and then he asked: "Will some of you bring out the hand-bag and lock the door as you come along?"

Two or three started to comply, but gave up to the one who stood advantageously nearest the door.

A "livery team" seemed commonplace enough to the people who were accustomed to Father McNally's spanking pair of beautifully dappled dark bays and his elegant harnesses and carriage. The impression was not helpful to the "new priest," for these farmers liked to look at good horses and fine turnouts, and that of Father McNally's, one of the best in the county, had been so long an appurtenance of their priest, that they had come to



regard such equipment as essential to his becoming appearance.

"Where did the new priest come from, d'ye know?" Johnny was asked.

"I guess he's straight from th' 'ould dart," answered Johnny, who considered himself very much of a Yankee. "He's down at the tavern eating his breakfast in his room, instead of going into the dining-room," he added, with a fun-making twinkle in his eyes.

"I wonder what part o' Ireland he's from," queried one, "he looks like a Connacht man."

"Indeed, I guess he is, he looks like it," returned another, "indeed he does."

At this, the few who had lingered within the entry, seeing the door about to close, came out, and among them Kate and her mother. As they emerged from the doorway, a young man who had been standing at one side, watching the entrance as with some purpose, walked over to them. Kate saw him coming, but by diverting her attention to raising her parasol, she made pretense that she did not, so that as he came up to them, he was first noticed by Mrs. Barry, saying: "Musha, how d'ye do, Frank, I'm glad to see ye."

"Very well, Mrs. Barry," he answered, "how do you do?"

At the sound of his voice Kate turned toward him and said, as she swung her parasol over her other shoulder: "How do you do, Frank?"

"How do you do, Kate," said he in turn, and then continuing addressing both: "Rather sudden change here this morning."

"Indeed it is," said Mrs. Barry, "a sudden change, sure enough; th' sorra one o' me but feels that bad that I could sit down this minuit an' cry me fill."



"Oh, well," said the young man in a sort of comforting way, "this new man looks like a good priest, and I believe it's all for the best. We all know there is work to be done here that Father McNally neglected, and if this man takes hold, as I think he will, we'll all be glad of it. I am sorry to see Father McNally go, but then, we couldn't have him always."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," said Kate, "for I always liked and admired Father McNally, and I feel now as if I might say, it will be a long time before we see his equal here."

"Katherine always thought a grate dale o' Father McNally," put in Mrs. Barry, "an' she always shticks up for her frin's."

"That's right," said the young man, "that's the kind of friendship worth the name." Then bolting to the subject evidently uppermost in his mind, he said: "I suppose you are all going to the Farmer's Picnic next week?"

Kate made no reply, but looked interestedly toward the street, to give her mother the occasion. "We've been talkin' about it," said Mrs. Barry, "an' of coorse we'll go, fer sure, won't everybody be there?" Kate still finding interest in the vehicles drawing up in front, and the young man having failed to attract her attention by his remark, there was an awkward pause for a moment. Mrs. Barry gave the edges of her light shawl a little pull into position, and said: "Well, father's waitin'—good-bye, Frank, I suppose we'll see ye at the picnic," as she turned to go.

"Good-bye," he answered, and as Kate was already in advance of her mother, he added: "can I see you a moment, Kate?" Mrs. Barry continued toward their carriage, for she surmised what the young man had to say, and would give him all opportunity. Kate turned



back a step, and the young man, with slight embarrassment, said: "I'd like to take you to the picnic, if you have no other engagement."

"Why, no," replied Kate somewhat indifferently, "I don't know as I have, I hadn't thought much about going, anyway."

"Well," he persisted, "shall I count on your going?"

"Yes, I'll be ready," said Kate as she glanced toward her mother sitting in the carriage, "good-bye."

"Good-bye," he returned, but she waited not to hear it, and was halfway to the carriage before he had uttered it.



## CHAPTER VII.

Frank Dunn was a young farmer, well-to-do, and of excellent repute. He lived two miles southwest from Plainfield, with his mother and an unmarried sister, upon a large farm which had been left to him and his sister upon the death of his father some eight years before. He was about twenty-seven years of age, of medium stature, rather slender, but well proportioned. His features were regular, his eyes blue, his forehead broad and high, his nose straight and rather thin, his mouth small and his chin slightly receding. He wore no beard, and his ruddy complexion in some degree modified the freckles which on a paler face would be very much in evidence. His hair, which he always kept pretty well cropped, was red, a sort of chestnut-red, not so obtrusive as the carrot-red variety. He was quiet and retiring in disposition, but, under provocation, disposed to show temper. He was, perhaps, more than ordinarily intelligent, but had only such education as he obtained at the district school, with two winters at the academy in Plainfield.

He had long been a suitor of Kate's in a timid sort of a way, driving over to the Barry farm once in a while, taking her to some entertainment occasionally, and always managing in some way to speak to her at church. He was, nevertheless, very much in love, and Kate, if present in person, could not fill his thoughts and inspire his conduct more than she did as he turned the furrows in his quiet fields. His suit was favored by Kate's parents because he was not only a thrifty well-to-do young farmer



but also of Irish stock and, like themselves, a good Catholic.

Kate, however, received him rather indifferently, not because she disliked him, but because John Harmon held first place in her mind. Nevertheless, she found something very congenial in Frank Dunn, in his manner, his language, in the tone of his voice and common interest in the topics that most interested him. In her heart, if she looked carefully, she would find that she liked him even to the degree of feeling some love for him, but she had never sought to know, nor would she permit herself to consider what place exactly he held in her estimation. Of the attitude of her mind toward John Harmon, however, she was very certain. Although unassured by any word or act of his that he entertained more than friendship for her, she admired his intellectual acquirements, she felt complimented by his attention, she was proud of his company, and always pleased to give him preference. It was for such reason, therefore, that she shrank from Frank Dunn at the church door on the Sunday referred to, for she immediately surmised the proposition he was about to make. She knew that the Farmer's Picnic was to be held in the ensuing week, and feeling very sure that John Harmon would propose to accompany her there, she had hoped that his invitation would be offered before Frank made his. However, Frank having proposed first, and quite in the presence of her mother, there was nothing to do, despite the disappointment in her heart, but to accept.

"Fwhat did Frank want?" asked Mrs. Barry, as Kate seated herself beside her mother and the homeward trip began.

"Why, he asked me to go to the picnic with him," answered Kate, rubbing her chin with her handkerchief.



“Waal, av coorse ye said ye’d go?” queried her mother, turning to Kate in anticipation of her answer.

“Yes, I told him I’d go,” said Kate, trying to look unconcerned.

“I knew he was goin’ to ax ye, an’ I didn’t want ye to say ye wouldn’t go,” said Mrs. Barry. Then, after a few minutes silence, she continued: “Theyr’ll be a grate gatherin’ theyre, an’ I want ye to put the lace on yer white swiss this week so’s to have it all ready.”

Kate, not making any reply, after a long pause her mother asked: “Fwhat’re ye thinkin’ about?”

“Oh,” said Kate, looking away into the fields, “I’m thinkin’ of Father McNally.” Having thus introduced, all unintentionally, the event of the day, every other interest was excluded, at least from her mother’s mind, and the departure of their old priest and the coming of the new one occupied their conversation during the drive home.

That evening, after supper, Kate took her “Imitation of Christ,” which she always turned to for solace she could not ask of her mother, and, passing through the front door, seated herself on one of the side seats there outside. The old people, in their accustomed places behind the Virginia creeper, talked with unflagging interest of the topic of the day, taking no note of Kate’s absence after her mother had observed her seated with her book at the front door, before joining Mr. Barry on the side porch.

Through a gap in the old orchard made by the loss of a tree from the second row, Kate could scan the road, from where she was sitting, for quite a quarter of a mile. As often as she looked up from her book, her eyes turned expectantly down this little vista, for this was the direction whence Mr. Harmon came, and this was the hour of



his usual coming. But the time went by, the shadows gathering in the orchard at length shut out her view, and with closed book upon her knee she sat listening to the crickets chirping loud in the grass, and watching the stars coming as if through the zenith, and scattering slowly down over all the sky to the horizon. When at length the sound of the clock striking nine reached her, she arose and, entering the hall, closed the front door, and going through to the side porch, joined her parents, still sitting there.

Two days later, when Andy returned from an errand to Plainfield, he brought in the mail a note to Kate, from John Harmon, in which he expressed regret over his inability to see her Sunday evening, explaining that the unexpected arrival of friends from out-of-town detained him, and adding that he hoped to see her the following Sunday, if not sooner. In the mail was a letter also, bearing the familiar handwriting of her brother James, in the West, addressed to her father.

"Mother," she called out to Mrs. Barry, in the milk-room: "Here's a letter from James!"

Mrs. Barry, holding the skimmer in her hand, came out to where Kate stood near the kitchen door, as she said: "I wondher if anythin's happined—fwhy, it's only lasht week we got a letther fram 'm before."

"I'm going to open it," said Kate, with anxiety in her tone.

"Do, open it acushla till we see fwhat it sez."

Kate tore the envelope open, and as she read aloud that little Katie, her brother's child named after his sister, was very ill of scarlet fever, that the doctor gave no assurance, and that the child called almost continuously for "auntie Kate," Mrs. Barry sank into a chair, and still holding the skimmer in her right hand, covered her



face with her apron in her left, and wept and blew her nose alternately. When Kate had finished, tears were in her eyes, and stepping to the door she looked over toward the stables in the hope that she might see her father.

This son James, with his wife and child, had made a two-weeks' visit to the old homestead the previous autumn, at which time little Katie established herself deeply and dearly in the admiration and affection of her aunt and her grandparents, as such little tots usually do under such circumstances. Therefore, that she was ill and possibly in danger, filled the household with grief and anxiety.

When Mr. Barry came in and the letter was shown him, he suggested, as soon as he had finished reading it, that Kate should go to the sick child.

"I think you'd betther go, Katherine," he said, "fer don't ye see theyre," holding the letter out to her, "how the little darlin' in her fever's callin' fer ye? If anythin'd happen, we'd never forgive oursel's." With this he wiped his eyes with his red bandanna, and walking over to a calendar on the wall, studied it a moment, and then seating himself, he continued: "ye see, this letther is dated th' 14th, an' to-day is th' 17th. If ye could git ready so's to lave here this evenin', ye'd be theyre Sunday, an' it'll do ye good yersel' to get a change afther yer long siege at th' siminary."

It was so decided upon, and Kate, assisted by both father and mother, prepared for the journey. Andy was sent to bring her trunk down again from the garret, and then hurried out to the stable to oil the buggy and have everything ready to take Kate and her trunk to High Falls in time for the night train West. At dinner-time the trunk was packed and strapped, and Kate quite ready for the journey. Little was taken at the meal, though each tried to



encourage, by example, the other. Kate sipped lightly at her tea, and at the urgent and repeated solicitation of her mother, tried to partake of the prized dainties that were opened for her. It was, however, a tasteless task, and after the perfunctory meal was over, Mrs. Barry said: "Now Katherine dear, as soon as iver ye get theyre, sind us word how ye find her, fer we'll be onaisy enough till we hear from ye."

"Yes," added her father, "as soon as ye get theyre sind us a telegraf, an' I'll have Andy over at Plainfield to get it Sathurday night."

"Oh, yes," replied Kate, "I'll telegraph you just as soon as I learn how she is, and then Sunday I'll write you a good long letter."

"Do, acushla," said her mother, and clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, she continued: "An' may the good God grant ye'll have good news t' sind us."

With much weeping by all three, Kate kissed and embraced her father and then her mother as she bade them good-bye, and entering the buggy with Andy, she set out upon her long journey, looking back as they turned into the road and waving her tear-wet handkerchief to her parents, looking after her from the porch through tear-dimmed eyes.

The three days following Kate's departure were long and cheerless ones in the Barry household. Her absence for a single day had always been sufficient to let gloom into the house. To make matters worse now, the weather had become cloudy, and for two days a drizzling rain had set in. This, however, kept the old man indoors, and at least gave to each one the company, however cheerless, of the other.

At length, however, Saturday evening came, and long



before the appointed time, found Andy tying Pete at the hitching-post in front of the telegraph and postoffice, as both occupied the same room at Plainfield. Going inside, he was told that the telegram had not arrived yet, and, backing up against the wall in front of the letter-boxes, with his hands behind him, he stood watching the people passing in and out, and listening to the clicking of the telegraph instrument beyond the partition, and wondering each few minutes if what he was hearing then was the coming message. As he stood there, nodding occasionally to those he knew among the people passing in and out, John Harmon entered with letters to mail, and, seeing Andy, he said: "Hello Andy, how's everybody over at the farm?"

"Oh, pretty well," answered Andy, "'cept Kate's gone away."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Harmon, turning from the letter-box with sharp interest, and stepping over in front of Andy, he continued: "Gone away, did you say?"

Andy nodded.

"Where's she gone?" he asked.

"She's gone to her brother James's," returned Andy, "little Katie's very sick."

Without a word Mr. Harmon turned his side toward Andy, and thrusting his hands into his pockets, stood for a minute looking toward the floor. Then he asked, without changing his position or the direction of his eyes: "When is she coming back?"

"I dunno," answered Andy, "I didn't hear thim say."

After another pause Mr. Harmon raised his eyes to the door, and without a parting word to Andy, walked slowly out.

Shifting his weight occasionally from one foot to the other, Andy stood there patiently through three long hours and yet no telegram came. At length, a clerk came



out and stepping up on a chair, proceeded to blow out the lamps and to make ready for closing. Did the office remain open, Andy would have stood at his post till morning, for, having been sent for the telegram, he believed it must come, sooner or later, and he shrunk from returning to the old people without it. However, after making one more inquiry through the delivery window, he walked dejectedly out, and was greeted by a little whinny from Pete, who was restlessly stamping back and forth the slack of his halter. Going over to him, Andy patted him on the neck, and slowly unfastening the halter, was drawing his saddle-girth a hole tighter, when the clerk shouted from the office window: "Say, you fellow! wait a minute, that message is on the wire now!" Andy retied Pete and was at the window in a jiffy. In a few minutes the message was received, placed in an envelope and handed out to Andy who, quickly mounting Pete, gave him so free bridle with his nose pointing homeward, that he sped along the road like a racer.

Upon reaching the house he found the old people on the porch anxiously awaiting him, and as he drew up Mr. Barry said: "Well, Andy, I declare to goodness, I thought ye'd never come."

"Have ye th' tilegraf?" inquired Mrs. Barry, before he could utter a word.

"Yis, theyre 'tis," he said, reaching over from his saddle and handing the envelope to Mr. Barry.

The old man turned quickly into the sitting-room, followed by his wife, and opening the envelope under the lamp read aloud: "Katie very ill but no worse. Pleased to see me." Andy restrained Pete long enough to overhear this, and then went on with him to the stable.

"Thank God," said Mrs. Barry, "it's good that she's no worse."



“So it is,” said the old man, refolding the telegram and replacing it in the envelope. “In th’ lettter we’ll get all th’ perticulars.”

The next morning, the old people feeling more assured, had some thought for other things, and at breakfast, Mr. Barry, taking his second cup of coffee, said: “Mother, what do you think about goin’ to th’ picnic?”

“Oh, I think we hadn’t betther go,” answered Mrs. Barry.

“So’d I,” said the old man, “I guess we’ll sthay at home this year. But,” he continued after a moment’s pause, “don’t you think we ought to sind word to Frank?”

“No,” she replied. “Katherine wrote ’im a note before she wint, an’ I sint it over to the postoffice lasht night with Andy.”

“I’m glad she did,” said the old man, “that’s th’ girl that never forgets nothin’.”

On the following Wednesday the old people learned upon receipt of the promised letter, that little Katie was still very ill, and that no encouraging change had taken place. The morning following Kate’s arrival, she had appeared better, but in the afternoon, at the hour Kate was writing, her temperature was more than a degree above what it had been on previous afternoons, and as she slept she mumbled and moaned and tossed her arms about uneasily. The doctor said there were indications of delirium and, although anxious, he thought there was yet no occasion for alarm. In concluding her letter, Kate assured her parents that she would write them every day while little Katie’s condition was so bad, or until she was considered out of danger. This statement was the only one in the letter which gave the old people any relief in their solicitude, and for which they both invoked blessings upon their dutiful daughter.



## CHAPTER IX.

The following Saturday afternoon Frank Dunn and his hired man were in a "back lot" of his farm cutting corn. About five o'clock, repeated long blasts on the dinner-horn caused them both to stop work and look inquiringly toward the house.

"Wonder what's the matter," said Frank.

"I can't think," said David, his helper. "Everything was all right when I was over after the water half an hour ago."

"Well," said Frank, after another long gaze toward the house, "I guess I'd better go over, an' you can finish out these two rows an' then drive the cows home as you come along." So saying, he pulled a bunch of grass, and wiping with it the blade of his corn knife, started off across the field.

When he arrived in sight of the house he saw a horse and carriage in the yard and, as he drew nearer, not being able to recognize the turnout, his wonder grew, for he could not imagine who the stranger might be, nor what his errand. As he entered the yard, a wide inclosure extending from the house to the barns, he saw his sister Mary coming toward him from the kitchen door. When within speaking distance, Mary, shading her face with her hand, said: "Guess who's here?"

"Who?" inquired Frank.

"Father Logan," answered Mary, "he's in th' sittin'-room talkin' with mother."

"Is that so?" said Frank, stopping abruptly and turn-



ing to look at the horse and carriage standing at the "wagon-block." "Any body with him?" he asked.

"No," answered his sister, "he came alone, just before I blew for you."

"Well," said Frank, turning toward the house, "I guess I'd better go in and welcome him."

Upon entering the sitting-room, he found the priest comfortably seated in a large armchair, and as they shook hands Frank said: "I'm glad to see you here, Father Logan."

"Thank you," returned the priest, "I'm glad to get here, for it's a long ride from High Falls, an' I'm not used to dhriding."

"If you will excuse me, I think I'd better go an' put your horse out, because the man won't be here for an hour yet," said Frank.

"Ah," returned the priest, glancing toward the house through the window, "let him shtand theyre till th' man comes—don't mind him, Misther Dunn."

As Frank seated himself and the priest turned the conversation toward him, Mrs. Dunn arose and went into the kitchen, where Mary was preparing supper.

"I've been tould," said the priest, "that the former incumbint here used to shtop with a family by th' name of Barry, but I undhershtand they have a young lady or a dhaughter theyre, quite a Yankee, an' a graduate ov a Protestant siminary, an' I didn't care to go among them."

Frank flushed a little redder as the priest said this, and felt for the moment some embarrassment, but recovering himself quickly, he said: "Well, you will always be welcome here, Father Logan, and I hope you will come as often as you can and make yourself at home."

"I came up to-day," the priest continued, without apparently noticing what Frank said, "because to-morra'll



be airly mass here, an' I wanted to learn something about the people. If the congregation here is like what I saw whin I was here before, two weeks ago, it seems to me they ought to have a church o' their own, an' not be goin' to mass in an ould rookery like that."

This was what Frank was pleased to hear, and what he knew the people all would rejoice to know. With pleased interest beaming from his face, he replied: "Why, that hall won't begin to hold our people if they all went to church, and as to means, there's money enough and willingness enough to begin building a church to-morrow. We've been talking of it for the last four or five years, but nothing's been done."

"Well," said the priest, as he crossed his legs, "we'll see what can be done now with th' help o' God. But if the congregation is as large as you say 'tis, an' is able to support a priest, I think it would be bettther to divide the chaarge."

This suggestion was almost startling to Frank, for no one in Plainfield had ever dreamed of the luxury of a resident priest in addition to a church structure of their own. But this priest, with all his assumed zeal and piety, was very self-indulgent and as cunning as he was lazy. He did not like the long rides in prospect from High Falls to Plainfield, with all the attendant calls, work, etc., of both parishes, and if a division could be brought about, he was already figuring in his mind how to induce the bishop to permit him to remove to Plainfield which, while not calling for so much parish work, would yet afford him opportunity to gain the approbation of his bishop, by erecting a new church.

"I never thought of that," said Frank, after a moment's silence, in reply to what the priest said of division, "and I never heard any one speak about it, but I believe it



would be a good thing because there's a lot of work to be done here which could be done best by a man on the spot." Mrs. Dunn here came into the room and said supper was ready.

During the meal the conversation touched not on church matters at all, but was directed by the priest, in the main, toward Mary, in a clumsy effort to be facetious.

"Mary, why don't you get married?" he asked, peeping at her through half-opened eyelids.

Mary was not fair to look upon: she was freckle-faced, red-haired, and her upper front teeth were irregular and unduly prominent. Withal, she was thirty-five at her last birthday, and had never had a beau.

"Oh," replied Mary pleasantly, "because the right man hasn't come along yet."

Oh, well, ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, "look out Mary, or he may go by an' you not catch him!" and then he laughed again and slapped the edge of the table as he looked around to see if the others could appreciate the fun.

After supper Frank and Mary went to help at milking, and the priest went into the front yard and walked up and down the path as he read his breviary.

The next morning he did not arise until "chores" were done and breakfast over. When he came downstairs, his jocular mood of the evening before had disappeared. He was reserved and frigid. The morning being well advanced, and the Dunn family quite ready for church, he called for his horse and, followed by the Dunns in their carriage, drove away to Plainfield.

Father Logan was not a preacher in the sense of being a ready speaker, he had neither the spirit nor the faculty; but he had been very slow to learn that, or at least, to admit it. In his own conceit, however, he was a great talker, and, according to his own notion, he talked best



when he had a grievance and wanted to give the people a "touchin' up." Then, with vehemence for emphasis, passion for inspiration and clumsy fling for gesture, he at times became hysterically furious. When, therefore, near the close of mass that day he turned about to address the people, their expectancy of a sermon was doomed to meet with disappointment, for already, and thus early in his appearance before the people, the priest had a grievance. On the occasion of his preceding visit to Plainfield, he had overheard at the tavern the word "greenhorn" in the hall below, and at once accepted it as referring to himself. Although a greenhorn in fact, as the term is generally understood, he was very sensitive to its application, and, although he had no assurance that the term overheard was used with any allusion to him, nor that it was uttered even by one of his parishioners, so strong was the spirit of resentment in him that for two weeks he had nursed the determination to give the congregation such a "goin' over" that no one hearing it would ever again venture to use the epithet knowingly in his hearing, at all events.

"I want ye to be good people," he said, "an' I'll be a good priest. I know what me dhuties are, an' I know what to expect o' you!" this last with strong vehemence. "Don't take me for a *greenhorn*, or ye may find yersel's very much mistaken!" this with increased vehemence and an angry look. "I intind to see, while I'm here, that ye respect yer priest," this evidently with allusion to something he had heard with reference to Father McNally, "an' if I find any o' ye talkin' behind me back or disrespectful to me as a priest, as sure as there's virtue in me ordination, I'll make an example ov him!" this at the top of his voice and with a face black with rage. For quite a minute then, he stood there giving first the right



sleeve of his surplice an upward tuck, and then the left one, while he scowled over the congregation with lips compressed, and breathing coarsely through his dilated nostrils.

The congregation was shocked and pained as well, because a number of the Protestant people of the village were present at the service to see the "new minister." It was bad enough to be subjected to such an uncouth and rude manifestation of coarseness, but to have it displayed before their well-bred neighbors, cut the sensitive feelings of most of them to the quick. Finally, mopping his face with his handkerchief, he gave out the announcements, among others, that on next "church Sunday" he would talk with some of them after mass to see what could be done toward securing a lot and erecting a structure "fit for a priest to say mass in."



## CHAPTER X.

The old Barry couple received daily letters from Kate, keeping them informed of the varying stages of the child's illness till the crisis was passed, and indications of recovery were sufficient to relieve anxiety. In a letter written a few weeks later, when little Katie was so recovered as to be able to sit up in a chair a good part of each day, Kate stated that she had been solicited by all the household, and by none more entreatingly than by little Katie, to extend her stay with them through the winter. "But," she wrote, "I can not think of being absent from you, my dear father and mother, for so long a time, and then, too, there is my scholarship which, unless it could be arranged, I should have to sacrifice."

"What d'ye think we'd bett'her tell her to do?" asked Mr. Barry, as he refolded the letter.

"Oh, as she sez hersel', if it wasn't fer th' chance she has ta go ta that music school, I'd say fer her ta shtay," answered Mrs. Barry, changing her needle and making a long pull at her yarn.

The old man was silent for a few minutes, and then said: "When I go over to Plainfield to-morra, I'll see Misther Harmon—he had somethin' ta do about her gettin' it, I believe, an' I wouldn't wondher if he could fix it."

"Theyre wouldn't be no harm in thryin'," said Mrs. Barry, "may be it could be done so she could go in th' spring just as well."

But the next day it rained all day, and the old man had to forego his proposed trip to town. It was a raw, chilling storm from the East, with strong gusts of wind that



sent the treetops careening over and filled the air with leaves yet green, and broken bits of bough. Over in the pasture, the cows stood all day huddled together in the lee of a fence with their backs to the storm, and the sheep, massed in a fence corner near by, crowded and pushed one another for greater protection. It was one of those days in early autumn when the lighting of new fires indoors makes the house again comfortable and attractive. Over in her corner near the window Mrs. Barry sat knitting, looking up now and then when the blasts of wind threw the lilac bushes against the streaming window panes, and rattled the shutters as if to tear them from their fastening. Mr. Barry, in the opposite corner beyond the table, was reading the latest copy of the Farmer, and out in the kitchen, Andy and Betty were playing checkers.

"Why, here's somethin' I didn't see before," said Mr. Barry, and clearing his throat, he read aloud: 'Misther John Harmon ov this village was admitted on Friday of asht week as counselor-at-law. He will open an office over Daskem's harness shop fer th' practice ov his profession.' "

"Fwhy, I didn't think he was as near it as that," said Mrs. Barry.

"Oh, he's a shmart young fella," returned Mr. Barry. "I'll wager he'll make a good loiyer."

The old woman made no further comment, but seemed to knit faster and for some minutes seemed unmindful of the storm and of all about her. The old man resuming his search for other news, they lapsed again into silence. Presently Mrs. Barry, changing her needle, said, as if speaking the conclusion of her mind after the interval of thinking: "I believe it's just as well Katherine isn't here now."



"Why mother?" asked Mr. Barry, dropping the paper across his knee.

"Because she had enough to say about 'im as it was, an if she wuz here now, she'd be goin' an 'bout 'im all th' time," answered Mrs. Barry.

"Oh, mother, don't be foolish, you make altogether too much of it," said Mr. Barry, taking up his paper again, "I don't believe theyre's a thing more than frindship between thim."

"I don't know wheyre yer eyes 've been," said Mrs. Barry, dropping her knitting into her lap and leaning back in her chair as she looked over at her husband, "I don't see how ye could help seein', an' fer that matther hearin' too."

Perceiving his wife looking at him as if for some admission, the old man tossed the paper upon the table as he said: "'Pon me word, I never thought o' such a thing."

"Well, ye might think ov it," returned Mrs. Barry, resuming her knitting, "fer I could see it as plain as I can see what I'm doin'."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Barry, "Harmon is a likely kind of a fella."

At this, the old woman again dropped her knitting, and leaning forward in her chair, said: "Why, John Barry! fwhat're ye thinkin' about! D'ye think I'd ever let a child o' mine marry a Protestan'?"

The old man made no reply, but gazed at the storm through the window.

Picking up her work again, she added: "Well, may God forgive ye!" Then, after a few minutes' silence, she said, shaking her head, and without looking up from her work: "I'd rather see her in her coffin!"

"Well," said Mr. Barry, leaving his chair and walking across the room and back again: "I think we'd betther



tell her to shtay where she is, an' whin she comes home in th' spring she'll have somethin' else in her mind, fer Katherine's a sinsible girl, I'm glad to say."

"Ah, yis," returned Mrs Barry, "she's sinsible enough, but love makes fools o' th' besht o' thim."



## CHAPTER XI.

A few days later, Mrs. Barry suggested that Mr. Dabney, the principal of the seminary, was "th' man ta see about the music school," and it was decided that when they drove to town, as they always did about this time of year, to make an exchange of wool for cloth, Mrs. Barry would see Mr. Dabney herself about the matter. Accordingly, when a few days later they went into the village, Mr. Barry drove around by the seminary and waited, sitting in the wagon while Mrs. Barry went in to see the principal.

After what seemed a long wait for so small a matter, Mrs. Barry reappeared with a pleased and animated expression on her face, and as she took her seat beside him Mr. Barry asked: "Well, what did he say?"

"Oh, he said she could go any time, whenever she was ready," answered Mrs. Barry, with an air of relief. "He said he would see about it, an' fer us to tell her not to worry 'bout it because he would 'tind to it." Then turning so as to look at Mr. Barry, she asked: "Did I keep ye long waitin'?"

"Oh, I didn't mind it," answered Mr. Barry.

"Well," she went on with increasing cheerfulness, "I thought he'd keep me all day praisin' Katherine up to me, sayin' how much they all thought ov her, an' fwhat a good scholar she was. He's an awful nice man, an' such a gintleman."

Soon after they had alighted in the business part of the street, the old woman met Frank Dunn in front of the post office.



"How is Kate?" he asked.

"She's well," answered Mrs. Barry, "av coorse ye know she's out with her brother James?"

"Oh yes, I know," answered Frank. "When do you expect her back?" he inquired.

"I don't believe she'll come now till out in shpring," answered Mrs. Barry, "they all want to keep her theyre fer th' winther."

"Is that so?" said Frank with a look of surprise and disappointment, "I should think you'd all find it pretty lonesome over there without her."

"Indeed we do, but whin theyre ashkin' her to shtay, we must be satisfied."

As they drove home, Mrs. Barry said: "I don't believe Katherine's sendin' any letthers to Frank. I met him on th' sidewalk to-day an' he ashkt how she was an' whin she's comin' home, an' I could tell be 'im that he didn't know anythin' about her."

"Well, if she don't want to write to him, wheyre's th' harm in her not doin' it?" queried Mr. Barry.

"I'm not sayin' there is," said Mrs. Barry, "I wuz only tellin' ye what I was thinkin'."

The following Saturday Andy returned from the post-office with a letter from Kate which relieved the old people of the last traces of anxiety over the outcome of little Katie's illness. It stated that she had entirely recovered, that she was quite herself and in excellent spirits again, and on that morning had accompanied Kate on a long drive with great enjoyment. In closing, Kate alluded to the approaching Thanksgiving day, and expressed regret that this year, for the first time in so many years, her parents would sit down to their Thanksgiving dinner alone.

Thanksgiving had always been a great festal in the



Barry household in the years when the children were yet at home. The turkey and the plum pudding were not alone the attractions of the day: there were candied popcorn balls as large as a bowl, taffy candy and butter scotch, all home made, roasted chestnuts and new sweet cider. There was holiday attire and frolic and fun, and merry hearts, and the sunshine of joy in the faces of all. To those days and their happiness Kate referred with fond recollection, now that time and distance threw them for the first instance in her life into perspective. She would eat her dinner that day, she assured them, thankful and happy, of course, with her brother and his wife and little Katie restored to health, and she entreated her parents to promise that they would prepare a good old-time dinner at home and with Andy and Betty try to forget her absence "this one time," and to be as happy as they could be.

With relieved minds now, and much work to do, the days went quickly by at the Barry farm. There was threshing of peas and husking of corn, and gathering of apples and fall plowing outside; there was making preserves and pickles and chowchow, there was spinning and reeling and coloring wool-yarn inside, and the busy days slipped by so quickly that before the old people realized it, they were within a week of Thanksgiving day. For a fortnight or more the weather had been perfect, a typical Indian summer. In the still air of the clear sunshiny days, the leafless trees seemed to be drowsing away into their long winter sleep, and each starlit night covered the fence rails and board walks with a hoarfrost that looked in the morning like a light, new-fallen snow. Such weather continued up to the day before Thanksgiving, when indications of a change began to show themselves. In the afternoon of that day the northern sky assumed a leaden hue which grew gradu-



ally darker, and with not a breath of wind, crept slowly up to the zenith, and at sunset had spread down over all the horizon.

The next day, Thanksgiving, the sky was clouded through all the day from dawn to dark. There was not a rift, nor even a thinning out for a moment in the murky pall anywhere. The somber air over woods and fields, indicated how thick and dense it was, and so evenly and uniformly was it spread over the sky, that the closest watching failed to distinguish the direction of its movement. It seemed to touch the hilltops near at hand, and overhead to hang so low that there was a sense of nearness in it as one looked upward to the sky. The air was cold, quite to the point of freezing, and so still that, to ordinary observation, it seemed to be absolutely motionless. It was a dark, gloomy kind of a day in which everything animate and inanimate seemed to cower before something impending.

Although effort was made, as far as preparation for dinner was concerned, to gladden the day in the Barry household, it was somewhat of a failure, for within, as without, the gloom pervaded all the more readily when hearts were sad and the darkened rooms shadowed vacant places.

At an early hour Andy had apprehended the turkey long designated for the occasion, and had it in the kitchen ready for plucking when Betty came down. He had also filled the wood box, piled high, and had a good fire in the kitchen and plenty of water drawn, because over and above his disposition to add to the cheer of the day for the others, Andy liked nothing in this world better than a good dinner except, perhaps, whittling fine pine wood with a good sharp knife, for he had been known, when thus engaged on a rainy day in transforming a pine stick



into a wooden chain, to forget dinner and to disregard all calls thereto even when the fragrance of boiling pork and new cabbage reached him through the cracks in the door leading through the woodshed to the kitchen.

Mr. Barry had, years before, established a custom of going through all his barns, accompanied by his wife, to review their contents and his stock on each Thanksgiving day, and to note and comment together upon the year's product and increase. He had never failed to do this in all the years since his first granary, built of logs, contained the first scant yield from clearings where obstinate stumps denied the plow the right of way. On this day, therefore, and as usual before dinner to which the review usually brought them with hearts full of thankfulness, the old man and his wife walked over to the barns and, opening the great driveway doors for better light, looked up at the mows and great bays filled to the rafters with hay and grain, and talked of the quality of the hay and of the weight of the grain as only people can who are familiar with the growing and care of such. Slowly they went about from barn to barn, and through the great granary and the corn-house, and over to the hog-house where the immense fat porkers, too indolent to stand, were lying on the floor and, without lifting their heads, grunted protests against disturbance of their fat felicity. Thence, into the yard where the hens and turkeys were usually fed and to which they came noisily on being called, running and flying over fences and through bordering bushes; thence into the great barnyard where the cattle and sheep were corralled for inspection. There they viewed admiringly the yearlings and two-year-olds and commented on their growth and indications promising the good qualities of their dames as "pail-fillers"; they eyed with pleasure the smooth



coats and capacious udders of the cows, and discussed the age and talked of the failing yield of one here and there and of how many such were to be disposed of before winter; they counted the lambs till the count agreed and considered how many should be added to the flock and how many let go to the butcher. Then they strolled back to the house and went into the cellar where they looked over the great bins of potatoes and apples, and the store of beets and turnips and cabbages, and examined to see how much was left of last year's pork and corned beef in the barrels there. When they returned upstairs dinner was ready and awaiting them some time, and Betty "'most out o' patience tryin' to keep the things from gettin' cold.'" But Mrs. Barry soon restored her good nature by telling her, upon going into the kitchen and looking at the turkey and tasting the stuffing, that she herself could not have done it better.

As they sat down to dinner with hearts full of thankfulness and appetites sharpened by the stroll about the barns in the cold air, they were in excellent condition to enjoy the meal and the occasion if memory of former years and absent ones could have been suppressed. But, alas! at no time during the day did it assert itself so obtrusively as at the moment of thus sitting down to table. Then each, almost overcome, was obliged to remain silent for some minutes lest the broken voice betray the emotions swelling in their hearts.

After dinner which, after all, turned out to be a very enjoyable one once they had begun to taste it, Mr. Barry told Andy to hitch up the two-seated family carriage and they would all together take a drive to Plainfield and perchance get a letter at the post office. The roads were smooth as a floor owing to the freezing nights and long continued fair weather, and as they drove along the ex-



hilaration of their even, rapid passage through the bracing atmosphere stimulated their faculties and brightened their spirits. Upon reaching town, however, they found the post office was closed for the holiday, and therefore, as a compensating diversion, they drove up the other side of the river on the way back, crossing over at the red mill bridge and down along the more familiar mill road home.

When Andy came in from the stable that evening he said to Betty as he blew out his lantern: "I think we're near some kind of a shtorm." Mr. Barry overhearing the word "storm" from the sitting-room called out:

"Did you say it was beginning to sthorm, Andy?"

"No," he replied, "it's just the same as all day, but I'm thinkin' there's somethin' comin' for th' night feels loike it."

"I don't doubt av the wind goes to the south to-night," said Mr. Barry, "you may be sure of a wet day to-marra."

Next morning, to the great astonishment of them all, they saw, as they looked out from their chamber windows, that it was snowing and evidently had been since early the night before, for the fences were quite half buried in it and low shrubs entirely out of sight. The snow had fallen so softly in the still air that it lodged on everything presenting an upper surface, and accumulated in piles and ridges on the tiniest foundations. On the cross-bars of the window sash it was piled quite half way up the panes of glass, and on the branches of a cherry tree that came up to the second story windows, it was piled along every limb and branch out to their smallest twigs, varying in width with the part supporting it, but in every place of uniform height, in some proportion on the larger limbs, but as thin as a knife blade on the outer twigs.



Noiselessly and with not a breath of air to slant the direction of the flakes, it fell like sifting sand, and so thickly that objects a short distance away were obscured from view. The unexpected change of scene outside brought to those looking at it a sort of shock of sudden transition from charming fall weather to midwinter, which shock however, was modified by the beauty of the changed appearance of things. The snowy trimming of trees and vines, and shrubs not yet covered altogether, was suggestive of the exquisite performance of the confectioner's art, the boards of the fences seemed as if trimmed with ermine and every fence post looked like a drum major in a snow-white shako.

Startled by anxious thought for his sheep and his stock, Mr. Barry dressed hurriedly and, calling to Andy, hastened downstairs where he found that Andy had preceded him.

"God bless us!" said Mr. Barry as he put on his overcoat while Andy was pulling on a pair of rubber boots, "who'd ever thought av shnow as suddin as this?"

"I knew we was near somethin'—don't ye remember I tould ye so lasht night?" returned Andy rather too exultantly to please the old man at such a time as this.

"Get down th' shnow shovels from the shtorerroom loft," said Mr. Barry, "an' let us hurry out, for I'm afeard th' sheep an' th' calves is shmothered." This put alacrity into Andy's movements, for he had not thought as far as that.

When the kitchen door was opened the snow presented a wall over two feet in height in the doorway, and Andy, going before the old man, and laboring to get his legs through the snow, made little way for Mr. Barry following him till they reached the barn, where they found it necessary to shovel the snow away before the door



could be even partly opened. Going through to the great barnyard they were relieved to find that the cattle and calves had all peaceably crowded together under the shed extending along the whole of one side of the yard, and that the sheep, although kept on the outer edge by the cattle, were all alive, having secured sufficient shelter here and there along the front of the shed, and by moving back and forth had so trodden down the snow along the front that they escaped becoming stuck fast in it.

After clearing a way for them, the sheep and the calves were driven into another yard having a small shed at the end of it, and then Andy set about clearing the snow from the hennery and hog-house, and from gates and doorways. As he was clearing the snow from a door opening through the long shed leading to the great covered strawstack in the rear, from which bedding was obtained for the stables, and preparatory to clearing a path out to the strawstack, he was called to breakfast.

The snow by this time had almost ceased falling, and overhead signs of breaking away appeared, patches of blue sky could be seen through the rifts and rents in the fleecy clouds moving slowly southward. Before breakfast was over, the first sunshine in two days, fell slanting along the dining-room windows and, by reflection from the snow outside, filled the house with a strange light. As the day advanced, the weather moderated under a clearing sky, and for about an hour at midday the sun melted the snow a little so that in places it began to fall from the branches, making ragged gaps in the continuity of the aboreal decorations. As the sun went lower in the west, it began to freeze, and at sundown the air was yet still, but very sharp, and the snow becoming stiff and unyielding.

Upon stabling the cows at "chore time," it was dis-



covered that "old Star-face" and "White-foot" were missing, and a search of the yard and shed failed to locate them. As soon as those stabled were cared for, Mr. Barry and Andy searched again with a lantern, this time looking also for any possible break through which the cows might have escaped for this, now, was the only explanation of their absence. As Mr. Barry was passing the door opening through the long shed at which Andy was at work in the morning when called to breakfast, he noticed footprints showing passage of the cows through, and, lifting the large wooden latch, he pushed the door open and swinging his lantern low over the ground for closer inspection, there very plainly could be seen on the smooth surface made by Andy's shovel, the tracks of the missing cows.

"Here's where they got out!" said Mr. Barry.

"How could that be," said Andy, coming from the far end of the shed, "when the door was shut?"

"Yes, shut now," returned Mr. Barry, "but anyone can see it wasn't shut whin they wint through." Examining the tracks by the light of his lantern, he went on: "they got out here, one follyin' th' other, an' crowdin' outside before they wint into th' deep snow, they bumped th' door shut an' ov coorse it latched itsel' Theyre 're th' tracks, one afther th' other, goin' over to th' shtack—go an' see if they're theyre."

After laboriously making the circuit of the stack, because the snow had become so stiff as to make walking in it difficult, Andy shouted: "I kin see be theyre thracks they've gone out farther."

"Well, come," called Mr. Barry, "we must go an' git th' snowshoes an' folly thim."

A few minutes later, with snowshoes on their feet and each carrying a lantern, they followed the tracks where



the cows had wallowed through the snow in a zigzag course, one evidently having floundered in the wake of the other.

"Old Star-face" was always the first to find a rail down or a board off the fence along the pasture, and when such was not available, she was ever disposed to make a breach with her horns, if the field beyond was inviting, and to be the first into the forbidden inclosure. She was somewhat "snow-blind," at least on sunny days in winter, and this explained why she had now wandered away from the buildings.

"How quick that thief ov a 'Shtar-face' was to find I didn't latch the door tight!" said Andy as they glided along.

"To find ye didn't latch it at all," said Mr. Barry, "an' whin she got out, why th' nixt one to her folleyed her, an' av they didn't happen to crowd th' door shut, they might all got out."

About fifty yards from the barn the surface sloped down rather sharply, a descent of quite sixty feet to a flat field below, and down this declivity the tracks led them. Near a hundred yards farther on they came upon the cows, stuck fast and shivering in the snow. It was plain that they had floundered this distance while the snow was yet light and soft, but even then, as the tracks showed, they had sunk exhausted at intervals until rested, and then plunged on again.

How to get the cows back to the barn was a puzzle quite too much for either Mr. Barry or Andy. They could not be led nor driven through the unyielding snow; it would take half the night to clear a path for them and, if left where they were till morning, they would die of cold and exposure.

"Fwhat in th' name o' God 're we goin' to do!" ex-



claimed Mr. Barry as he walked around the cows, and holding up his lantern, looked at them from every side.

Andy made no reply for a few minutes, and then said: "We might bring out some o' thim auld horse-blankets an' cover thim here fer th' night."

This seemed so inadequate that Mr. Barry said nothing and seemed to take no notice of it. But after a minute he said: "Fwhat was that ye said, Andy?"

"I said we could cover thim up wheyre they be with horse-blankets till mornin'," answered Andy timidly this time, for he feared now that his suggestion was not as sensible as it had first appeared to him.

But, as if a new thought had come to his relief, Mr. Barry said: "Go an' get th' shnow shovels."

When they were brought, Mr. Barry took one, and going to one side of "Star-face," told Andy to go to the other and begin shovelling the snow away from around her. When this was done sufficiently, the cow struggled to her feet and stood released on the ground, from which she nipped hungrily the dead stubble as she whipped her sides with her tail in her enjoyment of release from her berth in the snow. Then Mr. Barry and Andy set to work to enlarge the cleared space, and when done, "White-foot" was released in the same way and a little path opened through which she was driven to the cleared space in which "Star-face" stood, a pen-like circular inclosure about ten feet in diameter, with walls of snow heightened by what was shovelled out from the cleared area.

"Now go, Andy," said Mr. Barry, "an' bring th' blankets an' a good bundle o' hay on th' han'-shled—hurry now."

When these were brought, the cows were blanketed and



the hay strewn about the sides, and a bundle of straw spread in the middle.

“Now Andy,” said Mr. Barry, “fix th’ han’-shled across th’ path here ta keep thim in, an’ I guess they’ll shtay theyre all right till mornin’.” And, from the eagerness with which they snatched at the hay, there was little doubt of their doing else than “atin’ theyre fill,” as Andy said, and lying down in their snow pen till morning



## CHAPTER XII.

When Andy came downstairs the next morning he was surprised to see Mrs. Barry already in the kitchen, and a good fire in the stove over which she was preparing something in a tin dish, and Betty putting a cup and saucer and some toast upon a tray on the kitchen table. Andy looked around a moment in wonderment and then asked: "Is Misther Barry up, too?"

"No," answered Mrs. Barry, "he's not at all well this mornin', an' he wants you to go down on th' 'flat lot' an' look at th' cows before ye go to th' barns."

"D'ye think did he ketch cold lasht night?" asked Andy.

"I think he did," answered Mrs. Barry, lifting the dish from the stove, and as she placed it on the table she went on without turning from her work: "an' he wants you to take thim down some hay as ye go, an' whin ye come back, to tell him how ye find thim."

"All right," said Andy, "I was thinkin' o' that me'sel'," but to what particular he referred he did not state, and no one asked him.

The excitement and exposure of the evening before had proved too much for the old man who, after a restless night, had awakened Mrs. Barry at a very early hour in the morning, complaining of pain, as he said, "all over." Mrs. Barry had called Betty to start a fire in the kitchen stove, whereupon they set about preparing hot drinks and some nourishment for him.

When Andy returned from the "flat lot," he told Betty in the kitchen that the cows were all right, "'White-foot'



lyin' down as aisy as anythin', chewin' her cud, an' ole 'Shtar-face' shtan'in' up lickin' th' shnow." After charging Betty with conveying this to Mr. Barry, he went out to the barns to do the morning chores.

After breakfast Andy asked Mrs. Barry what she thought he had better do about the cows.

"He's goin' to get up in shpite ov us," she answered, "an' see to getten' thim in himsel', an' I'm afeared ov he does he'll get his death out ov it. He says fer you to go on ahead an' be shovellin' th' path till he comes."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Barry, looking haggard about the eyes, with a woolen tippet wrapped about over his coat collar and his cap pulled down over his ears, followed Andy, shovel in hand, out to the work of getting the cows back. The sky had become clear, and the sun, as it rose higher, overcame the frost in the air, so that about the middle of the forenoon the snow was melting from the trees and fences, and the icicles were dropping with jingling crashes from the eaves. About midday, the first team passed through the road since the snow fell. Four horses, dragging a bob-sled and a caldron kettle fastened behind it, went up the road with great difficulty and many halts, and presently returned with freer passage, and then up again and back again, until the track was made fairly passable.

At intervals during the morning Mrs. Barry went through to the milkroom, from the window of which she could get the best view of the barns, and looked anxiously for the return of Mr. Barry. At noon she could wait no longer, and dinner being ready, she put on over her shoes a pair of moccasins, and with a shawl over her head was just leaving the house when she saw Mr. Barry and Andy coming from the barn. Standing on the stoop,



she waited till they drew near and then said: "I was just goin' to see fwhat was keepin' ye."

"Well, av ye could see th' length of th' path we had to shovel ye'd know fwhat kept us," returned Mr. Barry as he took off his mittens and struck the snow from his legs with them as with a brush, "whew! but I'm most whipped out!"

As they entered the kitchen Mrs. Barry asked: "Have ye thim in yit?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Barry, "thank God theyre in th' yard agin, an' it was a hard job, I kin tell ye."

At dinner Mr. Barry took only a cup of coffee and then laid down on the lounge in the sitting-room, where Mrs. Barry followed and spread a wool blanket over him. As the afternoon wore away, he complained of pain in his chest, and growing more restless, he wished to get upstairs to bed. Mrs. Barry assisted him in getting off his boots, and following him upstairs she gave him some hot drink and, after covering him up well in bed, she came down to the kitchen, where Andy was still telling Betty some of the overlooked details of how they began clearing the path at the near end and worked toward the snow pen where the cows were. When they had cleared out to the pen, the path was all open, and removing the hand-sled, they let "White-foot" take the lead because "Star-face," so snow-blind, would not be likely to follow the path, and the cows came back "as aisy as if they were walkin' along the barn floor."

"Andy," said she, "I want ye to get ready an' go fer Doctor Agens—Misther Barry is raal sick, an' I don't want to let th' night come on without doin' somethin, fer him."

"D'ye think is he that bad?" asked Andy.



"He's bad enough," answered Mrs. Barry, "an' it's worse he's gettin' since dinner time."

"Well," said Andy, reaching for his boots which he had impaled on sticks for drying behind the stove, "don't ye think I betther hitch on to th' cutter so's I kin bring him av his own horse's used up?"

"I do," said Mrs. Barry, "an' th' roads're that bad I think ye betther hitch up two o' th' horses instead o' goin' with one."

It was about "candle light" when Andy returned, followed by Dr. Agens in his own sleigh. As the doctor got out with his crutch and cane on the porch, Mrs. Barry opened the door for him saying: "I'm glad to see ye dother, fer I was afeared ye wouldn't be able to come, an' I'm that worried about John."

"Been out shovelling snow, Andy tells me," said the doctor as he thrust his fur cap into one of the pockets of his great buffalo-skin coat and proceeded to disengage himself from it.

"Yis, out lasht night an' agin to-day whin he wasn't fit," said Mrs. Barry as she took the doctor's coat and carrying it to the kitchen door gave it to Betty, telling her to hang it on a chair near the stove.

"Well," said the doctor, running his fingers up through his hair on both sides, "let us see the sick man."

"He's upshtairs," said Mrs. Barry, and proceeding before the doctor, she reached the room in time to tell Mr. Barry in advance that the doctor was at hand, as she hurriedly arranged the bedclothes and straightened the pillows before the doctor, with slower progress, entered the room.

"Well, well," said the doctor, smiling pleasantly as he stood a moment in the doorway, "took advantage of the



first snow storm to get me over here, after all the beautiful days of summer were allowed to go by without a call."

"Oh dochter," said Mr. Barry, disengaging his hand from the bedclothes and extending it, "I'd be willin' to let th' winther go too, fer that matther, but whin we're down we must get help, ye know."

"I'll pardon you, I'll pardon you this time," said the doctor, going over to the bedside and shaking the hand extended to him, and, holding it while he felt the pulse with the finger of his left hand, he went on, after a moment's consideration of it: "but there is no very urgent necessity, as I see, for sending for me now, unless, as I suspect, you got lonesome with Kate away and wanted company," and the doctor chuckled as he looked around at Mrs. Barry.

Mr. Barry made a failing effort to smile at this and said: "We're lonesome enough, that's thrue, but lasht night I got so hated shovellin' shnow, an' thin cooled off out theyre before I got in, that I niver shlept a wink all th' night, with pains in every bone in me body."

"I was afeared o' th' neumoany, dochter," said Mrs. Barry with her hand on the back of a chair she had placed for him, but which he did not observe till he turned as she spoke, and thereupon seated himself in it.

"No, no," said the doctor with short quick shakes of his head, "no pneumonia—only a simple cold which in twelve hours will yield to a little care and attention." Then calling for a tumbler, some water and a spoon, he prepared the medicine and gave to Mrs. Barry directions, and instructions also as to what to do for the sick man. This done, the doctor leaned back in his chair and asked: "What do you hear from Kate—does she like it out there?"

"Indeed she does," answered Mrs. Barry, "but shtill



she likes home the besht ov all from th' letthers she sinds us. James's little girl was taken sick with scharlet fever an' Katherine wint out to thim, an' I guess she'll shtay all winther."

"I think I heard she went out because some of them were sick," said the doctor. "How is the little one coming on?"

"She's betther now, but I guess she was raal sick," answered Mrs. Barry. "D'ye mind whin ye brought Kate hersel' out o' th' scharlet fever?" she continued.

"Yes, I do," answered the doctor, "and by the way, the going then was a good deal as it is now, only that the snow drifted worse and kept the roads bad. Let us see, that was twelve years ago, if I remember right, and in those twelve years what a fine girl Kate has grown to be!"

"An' a good girl, too," added Mr. Barry.

"Did you know," said the doctor, turning to Mr. Barry as he spoke, "that District Attorney Galt of High Falls is dead?"

"No, I didn't," said Mr. Barry with interest, "whin did that happin?"

"I don't know what day," answered the doctor, "but he was buried last week."

"Well, I'm sorry to hear that," said Mr. Barry, "Mister Galt was a fine man an' a great loiyer. I remimber, over in Plainfield, whin he alone bate three loiyers in that Rivinton case."

"It is a little premature to speak of it," said the doctor with a sort of sly look, "but I may tell you that John Harmon is going to make a bid for appointment to the unexpired term of district attorney. Some of us think it is about time for that office to come to this part of the county."



"Indeed I hope he'll get it," said Mr. Barry, "an' I don't doubt he will, for he's a shmart young man an' has lots o' 'fin's."

"Yes," said the doctor, with a pleased look, "John's a good fellow, and is pretty certain to make a good record. If he gets this appointment," went on the doctor pleasantly and looking directly at Mrs. Barry, "I tell him the next thing for him to do is to get married."

"Oh yis," said Mrs. Barry looking at her husband to avoid the doctor's eyes, "I suppose theyre's plinty o' girls in Plainfield ready to marry him."

"Probably, but the one he wants I guess doesn't live in Plainfield," said the doctor dryly, as he reached down for his "sticks" and rose from the chair.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Mrs. Barry, glad to turn to another subject, "wait an' I'll have Betty make ye a cup o' tea."

"Oh, bless you, no," said the doctor, going half-way to the door and back again, "I was at supper when Andy came, and I've got to go now round by the red mill to see old Mr. Bently before I get home."

"Is he alive yet?" asked Mr. Barry.

"Yes," returned the doctor, "but he says he's ready to go now—he's got religion, you know."

"I didn't know," said Mr. Barry in some surprise.

"Yes, Methodist preacher Patton has been over to see him, and Bently says now, that he has found Christ and is ready to go and rest in Abraham's bosom."

Mrs. Barry clasped her hands together in astonishment, and Mr. Barry, nodding his head on the pillow several times as he spoke, said: "Well, Abraham 'd bettther keep an eye on Misther Bintly ar he'll execute a chattel mortgage on th' buzem an' lave Abraham, as he did a good



many others, to rue th' day he had anythin' to do with Misther Bintly."

"Ah," said the doctor, tapping the chair with his cane, "I don't take any stock in this death-bed conversion which is supposed to make a man of unprincipled and sinful life ready in an hour to enter the company of the blest and the fellowship of Christ."

"You're right, doctor," said Mr. Barry in approving tone, "theyre's nayther sinse nor religion in it."

"Well, ye know it's said," put in Mrs. Barry piously, "theyre's joy among th' angels o' heaven whin one sinner repints."

"Oh, certainly, or at least there ought to be," said the doctor, "but repentance is only a hopeful state—nothing more. Well," making a start toward the door, "if I don't make some hopeful sign of going, I'm afraid you'll repent having called me in."

"Dochter, you've done me good already, I feel bettther than I did all day."

"Good-night, Barry!" said the doctor, returning to the bedside and shaking his hand, "you'll be all right shortly, and then don't forget that, like all of us, you're getting old and greater care is needed to keep well."

"Thruer fer ye, dochter," said Mr. Barry "good-night."

When Mrs. Barry came upstairs after seeing the doctor off, she repeated the directions for giving the medicine to see whether she had them rightly fixed in her mind, and then, seating herself at the bedside, said: "Did ye mind fwhat he said about Misther Harmon getting married?"

"I did," answered Mr. Barry.

"Th' way he looked at me," she continued, "was enough to make me believe he was manin' Katherine."



"Oh mother," said Mr. Barry in a tone of weariness, "don't accuse th' man o' fwhat he didn't say."

"Well, ye know," persisted Mrs. Barry, "th' docther an' Mr. Harmon 're such fri'n's that fwhat one o' thim thinks, th' other says."

"Well, maybe they do," said Mr. Barry, "but he nayther thought nor said anythin' fer ye to get onaisy about."

After a pause, during which she lighted the lamp and placed it on a bureau at the other side of the room, she said, as she resumed her seat: "The roads 're open now, don't ye think we might sind Andy over to Plainfield to-morra to see ov theyre's a letther from Katherine?"

"Yes, he's got to go over in th' mornin' afther a couple o' butther-tubs," answered Mr. Barry, "an' he can go to th' posht office whin he's theyre."

When Andy returned from town next day just in time for dinner, he brought a letter from Kate which Mrs. Barry at once took upstairs. The old man was already much improved, and, propped up in bed, he read aloud the letter in which Kate said that for some reason she could not understand, she was filled with anxious thought for her father, and that the night preceding, she had dreamed that she saw him up to his waist in water trying to rescue a cow that in some way had gotten into the river.

"Did ye ever hear th' like o' that!" exclaimed Mr. Barry, dropping the letter upon the bed-clothes and looking with a pleased countenance at Mrs. Barry.

"She was always havin' curious dhrames," said Mrs. Barry, picking up the letter and replacing it in the envelope, "an' shtrange notions—d'ye mind whin she dhramed that Misther Morrell was kilt, an' no one knew it till they found him th' nexht mornin' where he was pitched out ov his wagon be th' roadside."



“I do,” said Mr. Barry, “God bless her, an’ th’ day she got it into her head that theyre was somethin’ wrong in th’ shtable beyant, an’ whin I wint out, to find th’ black mare casht in her shtall, puffed up as big as a barrel, an’ th’ life most gone out av her.”

“I often thought theyre was somethin’ curious about her,” returned Mrs. Barry, and, after a pause during which she studied both sides of the envelope in her hand, she continued: “we must sind her word right back that everythin’ is all right, so’s she won’t worry.’



## CHAPTER XIII.

The great fall of early snow, lessened occasionally by thaws and rains, remained on the ground, attended by more or less wintry weather, till about the middle of January, when a week of continuous mild weather, so mild that on several nights there was hardly noticeable frost, dissolved the last lingering traces of the great storm. For a period then of about four weeks, the weather was like a return to autumn—clear, sunny days and starry nights over bare brown fields and open streams. The wind, for days at a time from the south, was so mild that buds began to swell as in spring air, and even when for a day or two it turned into the west or northwest, there was nothing of winter in it. The farming people, particularly, marvelled over the weather and predicted that if the open season continued long enough to include “ground-hog day,” as they now began to fear it would, they were sure to have “another winter” and a late spring, or as some expressed it, a winter broken in two with the halves displaced into the adjoining seasons. Like a guest overstaying his welcome, the fair weather so lingered on that the 14th of February came in under the same continuous clear sky, to the disappointment of those who, watching the signs, thought they had perceived indications of a change which would bring about, before that date, the hoped-for cloudy weather. And, as if to sustain the importance of the observation made on “ground-hog day,” within the week following, winter bowled in again from the north with snows and cold and darkened skies, and “old-fashioned weather” prevailed



without a break till quite up to the first of April. When, however, winter did begin to yield, there was short time in its going. In one week from the disappearance of the last blizzard, bluebirds were flitting over the snow-banks, narrowing rapidly along the fences under the aggressive sun, and robins were carolling in the treetops. So speedily thereafter did spring advance, that farm work was undertaken, after all, about the usual time.

At the conference which Father Logan held in the fall with representative members of the church at Plainfield to consider the erection of a church building, it was planned to take such preliminary steps during the winter as would bring them into position to begin active work upon the structure in the ensuing spring. Johnny Feeny and Frank Dunn were informally designated to see what could be done in the matter of securing a building lot, and to solicit donations of money or building material, not only from their own people but also from the business men and people of means in the village without regard to church relationship. They set about the business with great diligence, giving, however, only one day in each week specially to it, although at all times they availed of passing opportunity. The response of the townspeople was very generous, one of whom, a man of means and not a member of any church, gave outright a suitable building lot, another gave all the building stone required at only the cost of taking it from the quarry, another promised some thousands of feet of lumber when they were ready to undertake the building, and so on.

While Frank Dunn was in town one day on this business and in conversation with the proprietor of the large and only hardware store in the place, the merchant said to him: "Frank, I would like to do something to help you people here, and, inasmuch as I have more real estate



than ready money just now, I am going to submit this offer: I own the house and lot adjoining the lot you have secured for your church, and I have been thinking it would make your people a nice rectory. Now, I cannot afford to give it all to you, but I will say this, estimating the property at \$3,500, which you know is a very low figure on it, I will deed it over, writing the deed at \$3,500 and endorsing \$1,000, my donation, as a cash payment, and give you all the time you want to pay the balance."

"Well, Mr. Cole," said Frank, seizing his hand, "I am more than thankful for your splendid offer. Our priest is coming here to live the first of May, and it will be a great thing to have a house ready for him to go into. I can't begin to thank you enough."

"I do this, Frank," said the merchant, placing his hand on Frank's shoulder, "to show my regard for you, and Mr. Barry, and the Keegan brothers and several others of your people that I know and have had dealings with—more, in truth perhaps, as a tribute to your worth as desirable citizens than as a church gift as such."

"Thank you," said Frank, slightly upset by the unexpected compliment, "I am very much pleased, and I shall never forget it and I'm sure our people won't."

During the winter also, Father Logan, aided by influence very close to the bishop, had succeeded in having his charge divided and himself assigned to Plainfield. The transfer was not to take place, however, till the first of May following.

A few days after the hardware merchant had made his offer of the house and lot, and in the week preceding the first of May, Father Logan came up to Plainfield to look after some preliminaries attendant upon his approaching removal, and was stopping with the Dunn family as usual. Frank had given him an account of the progress in secur-



ing donations and, with particular delight, of the offer made by the hardware merchant. The priest was evidently greatly pleased and became more and more interested to the exclusion of every other consideration relating to the prospective church, as Frank described the value and the advantages of the property offered by Mr. Cole.

"Go down to-morra mornin', Frank, and get a deed of the praperty before another day passes," said the priest.

"All right," answered Frank, "I'll do it, but how shall I have the deed made out—in whose name ought it to be?"

"Well," said the priest, peeping a little closer through his eyes, and with a deprecating wave of his hand as over a matter of small importance, "have it made out to me, so that if the people have any trouble payin' for the church, the house'll shtand in my name, d'ye see?"

Frank did not see, however, anything in favor of the priest's proposition, but supposing that of course the property would altogether be eventually transferred to the bishop, he said nothing in opposition.

The next day Frank set out to Plainfield, leaving the priest, who declined to accompany him, walking up and down the path in the front yard, reading his breviary. As usual, he was glum and so gruff in the morning that he was left quite to himself, the members of the household occupying themselves with their duties about the place, never undertaking to approach nor to entertain him until after he had eaten his breakfast at about half-past nine or ten o'clock. When Frank returned a little before noon, the priest was at the front gate evidently awaiting him.

"I got tired of the house," he said with a yawn and stretching of his arms, as Frank drove up, "and I just came out to get the air,"



"You should have gone with me, the day is so fine," returned Frank.

"It is a beautiful day," said the priest.

Stepping over the buggy wheel to the ground, Frank said: "Well, I've got the deed," and taking it from an inside pocket he handed it to the priest. With an air of indifference, the priest took it unconcernedly, and without opening it or looking at it, carelessly clasped it in his hands behind him as he said: "That's a fine horse ye have there, I've often admired him," although as a matter of fact, he had never mentioned it before, for he took no interest in horses.

"Yes," said Frank, turning toward the animal, as a shade of disappointment passed over his face, "Jack's a pretty good horse, but inclined to be a little bit lazy." Then, as he looked about the yard, "I don't see David around, so I guess I'll have to put him out and give him his dinner." As he led the horse away, the priest went into the house, where, as soon as he closed the door behind him, he eagerly opened the deed and saw with satisfaction in his face, that it was duly signed, sealed and attested, and made out to himself without qualification. Putting it away in his bag, which he carefully locked, he took his hat and sauntered out again with the air of one thinking lightly of the objects about him. Near the stable was a wide gate in the roadside fence, and another opposite it at the rear of the yard, through which loaded wagons were taken from the fields to the barns across the road. Here the priest halted, and resting his arms on the roadside gate, was apparently watching a turkey strutting among his hens at the other side of the roadway, when Frank came out of the stables. Seeing the priest there, he walked over and leaning likewise upon the top



rail, he said: "The roads have dried up wonderfully, and in places are getting quite smooth again."

"There is mud enough between this and High Falls, I can tell ye," said the priest.

"Well, I think," returned Frank, "you'll find it about gone when you come to go back."

As they stood there talking, a man, evidently a farmer, drove by, and as he passed he glanced with darkened face and sinister look toward them. When he was beyond hearing the priest said: "Whoever that is, I think he doesn't like us," making a forced effort at a little laugh.

"That's my next neighbor up the road, Bill Stanton," said Frank. "He was not looking at you, but me—he does not like me very much."

"How is that, Frank?" asked the priest.

"Oh," replied Frank, "we've had a good deal of trouble over our line fences, for the past two years. He's got a stretch of land joining me that he threw out to commons, just to get rid of keeping the fences up, I believe, and because my pasture joins it, I've got to keep up my fence, and his too, along that stretch to keep my cattle from going through his commons and into his meadows beyond. If his part of the line fence was any good, or there was stuff enough there, I would not mind it so much, but there isn't, it's all rotted down, and I can't cut a stake on his side, even in the commons, to keep up his own fence with, but what there's trouble over it, for he watches along there pretty close. We've had words several times, and the neighbors have got onto it, and it worries me a good deal because our disagreement is getting out around so's everybody knows it, and he loses no chance to give me a bad name."

"Do you think that it's because you're a Catholic has something to do with it?" asked the priest.



"I wouldn't wonder," answered Frank, "but then he'd have trouble with anyone over things as they are."

"To suffer persecution for yer religion, Frank," said the priest, "is a sign of the martyr's faith. Don't be discouraged: think of the blood shed by the noble army of martyred saints for our holy faith, and God 'll strengthen you."

How much further he would have gone on in pious exhortation can not be told, for at this point Mary, who had come toward them from the kitchen, was observed by him as he turned to lean his back against the gate. "Well, Mary," he called out merrily, "are ye looking out for that man ye were tellin' us about? I haven't seen him passing while I'm here—at least, I hope I haven't," and he laughed loudly as he peeped at her.

Mary stood with forced smile a moment, and then said: "Frank, dinner is ready," and turning, walked quickly back to the house.

As Frank and the priest followed slowly, Frank asked: "Did you find the deed was made out all right?"

"When I get home," answered the priest with a tone of finality, "I'll look at it and see if it is made out properly. I wish the next time you go to Plainfield, you'd see the man that owns the quarry and find out how soon we can put men at work getting out shtone."



## CHAPTER XIV.

Allusions to her home-coming in Kate's recent letters, stirred the old people to such a state of expectancy that quite everything undertaken or done about the place was undertaken and done with regard to her coming. The planting should be done "before Katherine comes home," the stables must be whitened "before Katherine gets back," and hens and turkeys were "set" so that the broods would "be comin' out whin Katherine's here."

The old man spaded and raked over her flower-beds along the north side of the garden, to have them "ready fer her whin she got home," and the old lady brought out the various bulbs which Kate had labelled away in boxes last season, and set them along in the narrow flower-bed under the south sitting-room windows, and in the flower plats out in the front yard. Housecleaning was accomplished with more than the usual upset of everything and everybody, and, while more than usually thorough, was hurried to completion as if Kate was to arrive before it might be finished. Betty went to bed very tired these nights, and often quite grunted over hearing Mrs. Barry say "as many times in an hour as I have fingers and toes," "what will Katherine think to find things so and so," even after she had done her work as well as usual. When finally, a letter was received mentioning the day on which Kate was to start for home, and the time at which the train would be due at High Falls, the spirit of her presence seemed to reanimate the house, filling by anticiaption, the atmosphere with the



life and light of her personality. The old people seemed disposed to do little else than to talk, twenty times a day, of whether they had better go themselves to meet her, or send Andy, of what the weather might be on the day of her arrival; and to fuss about, as far as they could do so, in making everything ready for getting her home from the station.

At length the day came round, and Andy having given Pete an extra measure of oats that morning, and having done the chores with unusual dispatch, was ready an hour before the time set for his trip to High Falls. The train was due from the West at one o'clock, and Mr. Barry had calculated that by starting at nine, Andy would reach High Falls about noon, and have an hour in which to give Pete his dinner before the arrival of the train. As Andy drew up in front of the porch for final instructions, Mrs. Barry put an umbrella and a waterproof cloak under the seat, "because," said she, "they're no burden if it don't rain, an' if it does, she'll be glad to have thim."

Standing on the steps, the old people watched him till he disappeared beyond the orchard and then, at the old man's suggestion, they went into the garden "to see how things were comin' up." As they were stooping there over a hotbed, commenting on the size of the cabbage plants, they heard a shout, and looking up, saw Mr. White, a neighbor, halting his team in the road in front of the garden.

"D'you know your sheep've got into your medder?" he called out.

"No, I didn't," answered Mr. Barry, letting down the cover of the hotbed and walking a few steps toward the man.

"Waal, ez I came along, I saw them in there 'n I thought



likely you didn't know on't," said Mr. White starting his horses by jerking the reins.

"Indeed I didn't, an' I must go right over an' get thim out," returned Mr. Barry.

"How in th' world can ye manage now without Andy!" exclaimed Mrs. Barry.

"I'll take a dish o' salt along," he answered confidently, "an' get thim back aisy enough, don't mind now."

But the task proved much more difficult than the old man expected, for the sheep, owing to their changed surroundings, or because they preferred real mouthfuls of clover to a promised dainty held afar off, paid no heed to his calls and ostentatious display of the salt dish, but ran down one side of the field to a corner where they nipped the clover till he came near, when back they ran to the other side and foraged again with great relish till his approach started them off anew. Before he succeeded in getting them out of the meadow, he had to call Mrs. Barry and Betty to his aid, and, stationing them at one side opposite a gap he had opened in the fence corner, he startled the flock from across the field, and as it neared the opening made in the fence, they all closed in with much shouting and brandishing of arms and sunbonnets, and forced the flock thus cornered to run through into the pasture.

This diversion, while helpful in so far as it withdrew the old people from expectantly watching the slowly passing hours, was rather too much for the old man, who, upon returning to the house, lay down upon the lounge where he rested till called to dinner, after which he returned to the lounge and slept through an hour or more of the afternoon.

After dinner, Mrs. Barry told Betty to have everything ready for supper at five o'clock, the hour at which they



expected Kate, allowing for possible delays. Half an hour before that time, however, Mrs. Barry, when upstairs opening the blinds at the windows in Kate's room from which the sun had gone, heard a call from Mr. Barry, whom she had left sitting below on the porch. Hearing at the same time the rattle of wheels, and surmising what it was, she hastened down stairs where, as she entered the sitting-room Kate, who was embracing her father, flew with a cry of delight to her mother, and throwing her arms about her neck, kissed her again and again while the old woman, clasping her, wept for joy. As her mother released her she saw Betty standing in the doorway to the kitchen, and running over, seized her by both hands and gave her a kiss on the cheek.

"I am so glad to be home again and to see you all looking so well," exclaimed Kate, taking off her gloves as she turned from Betty. "I worried so about father ever since you wrote he was ill, but he looks real well." Placing her hat on the table she said, turning to her mother and putting her arms about her again, "and you, dear mother, how have you been all this long time?"

"It was, acushla, a long and lonesome time enough fer us, ye may be sure o' that," answered Mrs. Barry. "Whin father got sick, I thought I must sind fer ye, but I'm glad now ye had yer visit out."

"I'll wager little Katie felt bad to see ye lavin' thim," said Mr. Barry.

"Dear me, yes, and she wanted to come home with me too, but they wouldn't think of it, they were so fearful of her getting homesick so far from home," returned Kate.

"Does she show th' effects of her sickness?" asked Mrs. Barry.

"Not a bit," answered Kate, "I think she looks better



than she did before. As soon as I get my trunk open, I'll show you a daguerreotype of her taken just a few days before I left."

Here Betty came to the door and asked: "Mrs. Barry, will I make th' tay?"

"Do Betty, fer I'm sure," turning to Kate, "yer both hungry and tired."

"Well," replied Kate laughingly, "I'm just a little tired and a good deal hungry,—I guess I'll run up and change my dress before supper, and if Andy will bring up my trunk I'll bring the daguerreotypes down when I come."

In the ensuing days Kate went about the stables and barns, and out in the fields accompanied by her mother or father or both, to be shown what was changed or new during her absence: the young pigs, the lambs, the calves, the fields sown with wheat and oats this year, and those planted with corn and potatoes, what was done in the garden and what in getting her flower-beds ready. They showed her by a mark made on the side of the cherry tree, how deep the snow of the great storm had been, and over beyond the barns, they pointed out where "Star-face" and "White-foot" had floundered to the "flat lot" below. Within, everything was quite the same as before, changes in the old home were unnecessary and unthought of. But with great pride, her mother brought out from a closet a large basket filled with vari-colored carpet rags wound up into great balls, and mentioned the old garments of which they were made, of how well they were sewed, and of how many yards of carpet she had "th' makin'."

They told her in response to her eager inquiries, of what had been accomplished over at Plainfield in church matters, and it was arranged that, on the following Sun-



day afternoon, they would drive over to show her the "beginning" made on the new church. Owing to some delay in the arrival of his successor at High Falls, Father Logan had not yet taken up his residence at Plainfield, and therefore, the Sundays intervening between "church Sundays" were still days of unoccupied leisure. After dinner, therefore, on the Sunday following, Andy had brought the family carriage up to the porch and Mr. Barry had taken his place beside him and was awaiting Mrs. Barry and Kate, when Frank Dunn drove up to the house.

"Hello Frank," said Mr. Barry, "what's the news?"

"Nothing particular," answered Frank, "I just drove over to see if you would send a team down to the Lime Kiln Bridge with a team of mine to-morrow to haul a couple of loads of lime for the church. There were two teams last week drawing sand, and now the masons are out of lime, and I didn't know who I could call on right off, unless you, and to send a team of my own."

"Why, yes," answered Mr. Barry, "I can send Andy to-morrow, or if I don't, I'll go myself."

Here Mrs. Barry and Kate stepped out on the porch all ready to take their seats in the carriage, seeing whom, Frank exclaimed: "Why Kate, how do you do!" and getting out of his buggy, he continued as he mounted the steps, "when did you get back—I really supposed you were in the West yet?"

"I got home Thursday last," Kate replied, extending her hand.

Mrs. Barry greeted Frank effusively, and inquired after his mother and sister. "We were just going over to Plainfield to show Katherine the new church," she said, "but there's time enough—won't you come in?"

"Oh no, thank you," answered Frank, "not to-day,



but if Kate wouldn't object, she could ride over with me," he continued as the color crept up into the white of his temples showing under the rim of his higher fitting Sunday hat.

"Well," said Kate, looking at her mother, "I'd just as soon."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Barry, going down the steps and leaving Kate to the exigency she was pleased to see her in.

"Well," said Mr. Barry, leaving his seat beside Andy and taking that designed for Kate beside her mother, "if that's the way it is, I'll ride here with you, mother, an' give Andy plenty of elbow-room."

As the carriage containing the old people moved away, Frank brought his buggy up in front of the steps and, helping Kate to her seat, took his place beside her and drove out, following the other carriage down the road.

In the happiness of home-coming Kate was more congenial than Frank had ever known her to be. She told with great animation, of the principal events of her visit, of the people she met and of her impressions of the country, and altogether appeared more charming and beautiful than he had ever seen her before. To her inquiries concerning parish affairs, Frank gave a running account of all that had been accomplished.

"Who keeps house for the priest?" Kate asked.

"I really don't know," answered Frank, "I've never been to his house, and I never heard him mention her."

"I wonder whether he will entertain as Father McNally did," queried Kate.

"Oh no, I guess not," said Frank, "he isn't much of a society man, I think."

"Do you still like him as well as you did at first?" she asked.



"Oh, he's a good priest," answered Frank, "the only trouble is, he hasn't learned the ways of this country yet."

"I understand," said Kate, "that he isn't much of a preacher."

"No, nothing very great," said Frank. "He told me once that preaching was not of much importance in the Catholic church. He said that he had once heard a wise old priest say that 'preaching was all fol-de-rol.'"

"Why, how absurd!" exclaimed Kate, "I think it is very odd for a priest to say that of one of the greatest functions of his calling! He stops quite regularly at your house, doesn't he?"

"Yes," answered Frank, "but he will move into the rectory next week, and then I don't suppose we'll see him over there so often."

"I suppose you'll miss his regular calling?" said Kate tentatively.

"Oh well, I don't suppose we're very good company for a priest anyway—particularly for one like Father Logan."

"Why, how is that?" inquired Kate.

"He's very reserved, you know," answered Frank, "and we don't always know how to take him."

"He may be a good priest, as you say," returned Kate, looking away into the fields, "but I must confess I was not impressed favorably the very first time I saw him. You know one is not always responsible for impressions, for they come unsolicited and I think, affect our minds more or less—mine always affect me very much, and they are seldom, very seldom shown to be wrong later."

When they reached the outskirts of the village, the carriage containing the old people halted till Frank drove up, whereupon it went on again directly to the church site. There the old people remained in their carriage,



while Frank and Kate alighted and went in for a closer view of the excavation, and the walls outlining the size and form of the ground plan of the proposed structure. Returning, they went over to the old people and Kate said: "There isn't as much done as I expected to see, from all you said of it, but I can see what it is going to be. That's the new rectory, is it?" turning and looking toward the house adjoining, and without waiting for reply, continued: "what a generous act that was of Mr. Cole!"

"Have any papers been made out yet?" asked Mr. Barry, addressing Frank.

"Yes," answered Frank, "Mr. Cole handed me the deed and I gave it to Father Logan."

"Well, I suppose he may's well hould it, but av coorse, th' house belongs to th' parish as it was intinded?" said Mr. Barry.

"Well, I don't know," said Frank with some diffidence, "how that'll be. Father Logan wanted the deed made to him and so it was done that way."

"Fwhat's that yer sayin?" asked Mr. Barry with a nod of his head toward Frank, and looking at him intently, "he wanted th' deed made to him?"

"Yes," said Frank, taking hold of the wheel-rim and putting his foot on the hub, "that was his order."

"An' he has it now, an' made in his own name?" demanded Mr. Barry.

"Yes," said Frank, "he took it home with him."

"Well, that bates me," said Mr. Barry, leaning back in his seat.

"Sure, in whose name could it be but his?" asked Mrs. Barry in pacificatory tone.

"It could be in th' name av a commitay or a boord av three or four min in thrust fer th' parish!" exclaimed Mr.



Barry, speaking over his shoulder at his wife with some excitement.

"Oh well, father," interposed Kate, "maybe that is all temporary and it will be transferred when the persons are designated to hold it."

"I think," added Frank, "there'll be no trouble about it—he'll do what is right."

"Well, we'll see," said Mr. Barry, "but if I was at th' makin' o' th' deed, I'd never 'd allow it." As he paused, Frank looked somewhat discomfited, but made no defense. "Come, Katherine," said Mr. Barry, rising to take the place beside Andy. "Come, get in, an' we'll be goin' home." Kate went round to the side of the vacated seat and entered the carriage.

"Well," said Frank, recovering himself as quickly as possible and to divert his confusion, "I'll count on your team to go down with mine to-morrow for the lime?"

"You may," said Mr. Barry, "if th' day's fair."

"Come over an' see us, an' bring your mother an' Mary," said Mrs. Barry as the carriage began to move.

"Yes, I will," answered Frank. "Good-evening."

"Good-evening," they called out together as they drove away, leaving Frank in anything but a self-satisfied state of mind as he entered his buggy and set out toward home.

That evening, John Harmon, to the surprise of the old people, appeared at about the old time hour at the Barry farm-house, and as they observed, Kate must have been expecting him, for she had "fixed up" after supper, and had lighted a lamp in the parlor as she always did when he was coming. He brought with him two books which he wished Kate to read, "so different in subject style and scope," as he expressed it, that when she tired of reading one, she would find entertainment in the other. His stay through the evening was unusually late, and Mrs.



Barry was several times at the point of showing her disapproval in some way, had it not been for the restraining influence of the old man.

At length, he took his departure, and as Kate passed her parents' room upstairs where her father had already retired, and her mother, seated in a rocking-chair, was looking over a box of old daguerreotypes, she looked in, and saying softly: "good-night, mother," was about to proceed to her own room, but her mother, looking up with a shade of displeasure on her face as she said somewhat coldly: "Good-night," Kate paused a moment, and then going into the room, she put her arms about her mother's neck, and kissing her affectionately, drew her face around till she looked into her eyes as she said again: "Good-night," and drew from her mother: "Good-night, acushla," in tones dear to her from babyhood.



## CHAPTER XV.

Next day, Mrs. Barry was in a very uncomfortable condition of mind. She had hoped that when Kate returned after so long absence, there would be no more of John Harmon's attentions. It was this expectation which had influenced her most in consenting to the extension of Kate's stay in the West, and yet, after all, on the very first Sunday evening after Kate's return, he promptly appears again, and stays so late that she is surer than ever that there is "somethin' more than frinship between them." Could she allow this to go on? If she did not "say somethin'" who would, and if nothing was said, how was it all going to end? Well, she could see very plainly, as any one might, and she was not "goin' to put up with it much longer." The circumstances and the nature of the undertaking were such, however, that she must conceal from her husband and daughter the trouble that vexed her, and her determination growing out of it. It was new experience for her and hard as it was novel to find a difficulty on her mind or a burden on her heart, however light, without seeking, as was her custom, the relief to be obtained by sharing it with her husband or daughter. If she should mention now, again, to Mr. Barry her disapproval of John Harmon's visits to Kate, she knew very well what he would say, and, remembering his recent repeated unqualified dissent from her view of the matter, she shrank from drawing upon herself anew his emphatic expression of disagreement. She could not speak to Kate about it—not yet, but before very long,



just as soon as she could see her way sufficiently, she must, of course, try to make Kate look at it in the light in which she viewed it; but for the present, there was no one with whom, she could confer or of whom she could take counsel in this trouble so near her heart.

Mr. Barry had driven away after breakfast to join Frank Dunn in hauling the lime as promised the day before, and Mrs. Barry and Kate, left to themselves for the day, were placed in a situation which made more difficult to carry out successfully the task the old woman had undertaken, for she found herself hourly face to face with the temptation which the opportunity afforded to speak her mind at once to Kate, and succeeded in resisting only by promising herself that she would wait to see what would come to pass on the following Sunday evening. If John Harmon did not come again, she would not only be relieved but glad that she had had the patience to forebear so well: if he did come, then there should be no more putting off—she would broach the subject at once.

But Mrs. Barry did not conceal as well as she thought she might the fact that there was trouble on her mind for Kate, not only noticed the preoccupation of her mother's mind, but perceived, through her sensitive nature, in the air, so to speak, a disturbance of harmonious conditions. She surmised that it was all owing to the lateness of the hour at which Mr. Harmon had taken his leave the night before, and grieving over its unhappy effect upon her mother's peace of mind, she secretly promised that not again would she suffer the like to happen. She could not think of anything else to account for what she saw and felt—she was certain she understood it all. Therefore, as she sat opposite her mother in the afternoon with her needlework, and noticed the activity of her mother's knitting-needles and the abstrac-



tion in her face, which repeated suggestions of topics of usual interest failed to more than momentarily clear away, she could endure the condition no longer and, after a silence in which she resolved in her mind what she would say and how she should begin it, she said: "Would you like, mother, to hear me read from one of those books Mr. Harmon brought last night?"

"No, Katherine, I don't believe I could undhershtan' it—I never did undhershtan' the kind o' books he brings here, as ye know yersel'."

After a little pause, Kate said: "We got so interested last evening talking of books I read last winter that before we knew it, it was so late—why, I never heard the clock strike till just before he went."

So many forms of reply came crowding to the old woman's lips for expression, that in her uncertainty, a few moments passed in which nothing at all was said, and Kate misinterpreting this as indicating that she was making no progress along the line undertaken, came abruptly to the point by saying: "You thought he staid too late, didn't you, mother?" as she dropped her hands and her work into her lap and looked inquiringly into her mother's face.

"Ye have sinse enough to know fwhat's right yersel' av I was dead an' gone," answered Mrs. Barry without stopping her knitting or raising her eyes from her work.

Kate continued to look at her mother for a few moments, and then, slowly taking up her work again began to sew as she said seriously: "I know what is right, mother, and I am sure that knowingly, I have never done otherwise. I carelessly took no notice of the time—it was simply carelessness and nothing else." Letting her work again drop into her lap and looking at her mother, she continued: "Anyway, I could hardly intimate to a gen-



tleman like Mr. Harmon that he did not know when he ought to go."

"No," returned Mrs. Barry, drawing her needle and glancing toward the window, "an' if he was th' gintleman he pretinds to be, ye wouldn't have to."

"Oh mother!" exclaimed Kate, resuming her work.

Both lapsed into silence again, and for some minutes not a word was spoken. At length Kate rose from her chair, and seating herself near the window at the other side of the table, said, as she resumed her sewing: "Well, mother, it will not happen again, for you know I could never do anything knowingly to grieve you or give you trouble." Ordinarily this would have been sufficient to bring Mrs. Barry to affectionate terms, and, although not uttered for such purpose alone, Kate was painfully disappointed to perceive that her mother took no notice of it. On the other hand, Mrs. Barry could hardly refrain from falling into the old-time terms of forgiveness and affection, and only succeeded in avoiding it by keeping her mind on the task yet before her. For a moment she was about to open up the subject at once, but, quickly recovering herself, she returned to her decision to wait till after Sunday. In the silence that followed for several minutes, the activity of the thoughts of mother and daughter was manifested in the activity of their fingers, Kate wondering why her mother made so great and serious a matter of what seemed to her very trivial, and Mrs. Barry thinking, as before stated, of the real, but so far concealed, cause of her anxiety. The rattle of a wagon in the driveway caused them to look up as Mrs. Barry said: "I think that's father—see av it is." After crossing the room to the window, Kate said: "Yes, he's going on over to the stables."



"Well, tell Betty to put th' kittle over, an' to be gettin' th' supper ready," said Mrs. Barry.

Through the week there were times when Kate could see no indication in her mother's face or manner of the trouble which she had so thoughtlessly caused her, but the pleasure she at such times felt and more or less purposely expressed, only resulted in bringing back, to Kate's astonishment, the cloud of thoughtful silence. As Sunday drew near she was glad that the opportunity would soon be hers to show her mother how mindful she could be hereafter to avoid giving her occasion for displeasure.

Sunday was "church day" again, and although it was generally known that Father Logan was about to take up his residence in Plainfield, there were many expressions of pleased surprise by the people living outside the village as they learned upon their arrival at the town hall, that he had taken possession of the rectory on the day before. As the Barry carriage drew up in front of the hall, Father Logan and Frank Dunn were seen approaching from the direction of the rectory, and as the priest turned into the yard to enter the hall, Frank walked on to where the Barry folk were alighting. After the usual salutations, Frank said: "I've just been up to the new church and find that the priest moved into the house yesterday."

"I thought that was th' case," said Mr. Barry, "when I saw him an' you comin' down th' shtreet. I suppose now he'll be here reg'lar afther this," he continued.

"Yes," said Frank, "there'll be mass now every Sunday."

"Won't that be th' blessid thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Barry.

"Did you see his housekeeper?" asked Kate.



"Well, I saw a woman there, but whether she's his housekeeper or not, I don't know."

"What does she look like?" asked Kate with some eagerness.

"Oh, she's a good looking young woman, I should say about thirty years of age," answered Frank.

"We'll probably see her at church," said Kate as she led the movement toward the hall door.

But in that she was mistaken, for the housekeeper did not appear at the service, nor at any subsequent one in the hall, for, as was explained long afterward, she told one of her early acquaintances in Plainfield that she "wasn't going to spoil her dresses in that dirty old place—when the new church was finished she would go to church, but not before."

When they returned home from church, Kate was pleased to see her mother more like herself than she had been in the week past. At the hall she had met some old acquaintances whom she had not seen in many months, who resided some distance back in the country and who attended church very irregularly—during the latter part of Father McNally's pastorate, not at all. She talked with pleased interest of the "blessin' av havin' a priest o their own among thim now," and referred to the time when a priest came once in three months a distance of seventy odd miles to say mass, and became reminiscent over the events and the incidents attendant upon the masses and services held in the little sitting-rooms of the early settlers. In all this review she failed not to mention the names of those who voluntarily labored to help the growth of the church, from Peter Mullen, in whose house the first mass was said many years before, down to Frank Dunn and his self-sacrificing service to the priest and the



people, and spoke of him as a "good, noble young man that desarved well o' everybody."

After supper Kate played several old Irish airs for her father, and responded in happy mood to her mother's request to sing her favorite songs. Later, as the twilight deepened, Kate left the piano, and after lighting the sitting-room lamp, went into the parlor and lit the lamp there, observing which, her mother's face became serious and she grew silent and thoughtful. Resuming her music, Kate sang and played until Mr. Harmon arrived, whereupon the old people went out to seats on the porch as Kate showed him into the parlor.

How Kate brought it about was not apparent, but about nine o'clock Mr. Harmon took his departure, and she entered the sitting-room just as her father was going upstairs to his room. Confident of having complied with her mother's wishes, she bade her parents "good-night" with a happy heart, and went upstairs to her room.

The next day Kate was surprised and disappointed as she observed again the cloud on her mother's face, even darker than at any time in the week preceding. As she marvelled in wonder over it, the thought came to her that possibly she had gone too far in taking it all upon herself—that possibly there might be some reason for it which did not involve her at all. But, what could it be? If it was due to business trouble, her father certainly was not taking it at all seriously, whereas, as a matter of fact, he was the very one who would make the greatest display of feeling under such conditions. The more she thought of it, the less was she satisfied with any conclusion arrived at.

In the afternoon the weather became very warm. It was the first really hot, summer-like day of the season, and the sun's rays came down through the still atmos-



phere with scorching intensity. Soon after dinner Mrs. Barry went up to her room for a nap, and Kate, left to herself, took her *Imitation of Christ* and, after seeking in vain some perceptible stir in the air at a window on the north side of the house, and then at one on the west side, finally seated herself on the porch where the thick foliage of the Virginia creeper, by shutting out the sun's rays and the heated air, afforded the most comfortable spot about the house. To her perplexed and somewhat discouraged soul, the pious counsels of the book brought some solace and spirit of patience. If she were fully assured that the troubled look in her mother's face was due to any affair or circumstance not involving her, how immeasurably relieved she would be, and how quickly she would fly to her with the support her comfort might bring. But against every such conclusion stood the recollection of her mother's words and manner in their short conversation upon the subject of the week before.

Thinking thus, and reading by turns for perhaps an hour, she heard her mother come downstairs and presently saw her, with a large palm-leaf fan in her hand, looking out from the doorway as if seeking someone.

"Who are you looking for, mother?" inquired Kate.

"I was just lookin' to see wheyre you were," answered Mrs. Barry, as she stepped out on the porch and seated herself in a chair near her.

"Isn't it awfully warm?" asked Kate as her mother began fanning herself.

"Yis, it's very hot," answered Mrs. Barry.

"Did you have a good nap?" inquired Kate.

"No," answered her mother, "not very good."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Kate, "it is so warm one doesn't feel like doing much of anything."

After a pause of some moments, during which Mrs.



Barry held the fan in one hand while she felt of its rim with the other, she said: "Now Katherine, don't you think that Misther Harmon's comin' here altogether too much?"

"Why mother," said Kate, closing her book, "what makes you think so?"

"Fwhat makes me think so!" repeated her mother, again fanning herself, "wasn't he here every Sunday night before ye wint away, an' now, as soon as yer back, fer him to begin again!"

"Well, mother," said Kate, smiling as over a trifling matter, "what harm can there be in that?"

"Fwhat harm!" returned Mrs. Barry, "ye know yersel' he's a Protishtan', an' that ought to be enough. Av coorse," she continued, "yer at that age now whin ye might be thinkin' o' marriage, an' av he was a Catholic like oursel's I wouldn't say a word, but fer a child o' mine ta marry a Protishtan'," dropping the fan in her lap and lifting her hands and eyes in prayerful attitude, "I hope I'll never live to see it."

"Why mother," said Kate very earnestly, and looking into her mother's face with candid eyes as she folded her hands over the book in her lap, "Mr. Harmon has never said one single word directly nor indirectly to me about marriage—never."

"Well," replied her mother, looking up at the leaves of the creeper, "av he hasn't, that's no sign that he won't, av things go on as they're goin'."

"Why mother!" exclaimed Kate, leaning back in her chair, "I am surprised to hear you talk so!"

"Well, ye needn't be," returned her mother, nodding her head toward Kate, "an' av ye have any regard fer me, er yer father, er yer religion, ye'll put a shtop to it."

Kate made no reply, but after looking at her mother



with astonished eyes a few moments, dropped her chin upon her bosom and gazed upon her hands without seeing them. After some moments of painful silence, Mrs. Barry arose and returned within the house. As she went, Kate listened till she heard her talking with Betty in the kitchen and, arising quickly, she went with haste upstairs to her room and seating herself in an armchair near the window, gave vent to her feelings in a flood of tears.

Recovering herself as soon as this burst of feeling had relieved somewhat her wounded heart, she wiped her eyes, and, after a glance into her mirror, crossed the room to her washstand and bathed her face and brushed her hair, for she feared that her mother would, at any moment come to her room or call her from downstairs. Then, seating herself by the window, she began to review, in the light so unexpectedly given her, those features of her mother's conduct and manner during the past few weeks which had so puzzled her. How plain it all appeared to her now, and how stupid she was not to have discerned it quite as clearly before, particularly after having heard her mother express herself about Mr. Harmon as she did the week before! Now, face to face with the solution of the trouble, what was she to do? Should she write Mr. Harmon a note telling him briefly that his calls must be discontinued, or should she write at length explaining why? She wished to be as just as she would be kind in the matter, and as nearly right as a woman's heart demanded in her procedure toward a man whom she respected, and whose good esteem she valued. Or, should she wait till he made his usual call on Sunday evening, and then tell him as best she could? The more she considered what course to take, the more she shrank from seeing him Sunday evening, and the more she inclined



to writing the letter. In the midst of these thoughts she heard Betty calling her, and stepping to the door, was told that supper was ready. Glancing into her mirror, she was alarmed to see her face still showing so plainly indications of her distress. Again she sought at the washstand to refresh her looks, and, improving her appearance somewhat, she went downstairs, but, instead of turning into the dining-room where she observed her parents already at the table, she went out at the front door, and, gathering a bunch of her choice roses, she went around to the side porch, in order to get all she could of the composing influence of the air, and, entering the dining-room from that side, she put the flowers in a vase, and placing it upon the table, seated herself in her usual place at the right of her father. As she did so, Mr. Barry, who had unceremoniously begun his meal, looked up and asked: "Are ye sick, Katherine?"

"No," she answered, "not sick, but this heat makes me feel miserable."

Her mother had given her a searching look as she took her place at the table, but made no comment.

"Well," said her father, resuming his supper, "I thought ye looked as if somethin' was wrong with ye. I see thunder-heads," he continued, "comin' up in th' wesht, an' av we get a shower it'll cool things off be nightfall."

About sundown a thunder shower with sharp electric display cooled the air and refreshed everything. After the first heavy down-pour, the rain slackened somewhat, but continued to drizzle out of the blackness overhead through the early part of the night. This condition of the weather had a soporific effect upon the household, and afforded Kate the desired excuse for retiring early, not to sleep, but to throw off the restraint upon her true



feelings, and to study out what course she should pursue. In the seclusion of her room she went over again, with minute recollection, every word and look of her mother on the porch that afternoon, and dwelt long and attentively upon what she said concerning religious belief. In the fairness of her pious and honest heart, she admitted the truth in her mother's words, and, aware of the extraordinary views on questions of religious belief held and advocated by Mr. Harmon, she wondered what her mother would say were she cognizant of them. Strange, that she had never given this matter a moment's thought heretofore, and yet again, would it not have been rather presumptuous if she had, for in very truth, as she had told her mother, Mr. Harmon had never, even remotely, intimated matrimony, nor had she ever seriously thought of it. As the result of their association, she had come to like him in an undefined way, more, perhaps, for his intellectuality than for any sentiment of the heart, and, without ever thinking why or whither, was pleased to drift along in his companionship and to give him the place of preferment in all her thoughts. Nevertheless, as her mother took position between them in uncompromising attitude, the effect upon her heart and mind was, somehow, quite the same as it would have been had her mother's suspicions been correct. To terminate now the established relation, however vague its character, which had developed between herself and Mr. Harmon, would be a painful and difficult task. And yet, if their association pointed even prospectively toward matrimony was it not better that it should end now, for how could she ever wed a man, if it came to that, whose religious views not only differed so radically from her own, but were so at variance with all generally accepted forms of belief? Yes, however great the sacrifice, it surely must



be made, for it resolved itself simply into a question of loyalty to her religion, and to filial love and duty, as against her individual preference. Seating herself at her desk she began the letter to Mr. Harmon, stating at length the reasons for doing so, and requesting that his visits and all further attention should cease. Before the task was half accomplished, however, she tore the paper into pieces in dissatisfaction, and began anew, with however no better results. After some consideration she decided to write simply a brief note instead of the long explanatory letter, and taking her pen again, she undertook its composition. But in this she succeeded but little better, and after trying again and again, she threw the fragments into the waste-basket, and closing the desk, sat down near the window with the conclusion quite fixed in her mind to wait till Sunday evening, and then to make her statement, and with such explanations as the occasion and the circumstances would require. This seemed to her, the more she considered it, the simplest and most straight forward course to take, and would also afford her an opportunity to say some things informally, which she would not intrust to paper.



## CHAPTER XVI.

On the following Sunday, Father Logan announced at the service that he would deliver a lecture or discourse in the hall that evening, upon the One True Faith, and that he hoped to see a goodly number in attendance. It so happened that an aged couple, long-time residents of Plainfield village, and old friends of Mr. and Mrs. Barry, had been invited some time previously to take dinner, and spend the afternoon at the farm on that Sunday. Accordingly, when mass was over, the old couple were taken into the Barry carriage, although the crowding of three persons on each seat made the ride homeward anything but comfortable in the heat and dust of such a day.

Arrived at the farm, they found the dinner "ready an' waitin'," as Betty expressed it, for in accordance with Mrs. Barry's instructions she had prepared punctually at the hour, the steaming dishes of first "new potatoes," green peas and spring lamb, which each year marked the beginning of the harvest season, and were always gratefully partaken of as a sort of triumphant feast of the year. After the dinner, the old people went out to the porch, where, in the shade of the Virginia creeper, they talked together of bygone days with so great entertainment to themselves, that Kate found opportunity to absent herself, and going to her room she wrote, almost offhand, such a letter to Mr. Harmon as her constant thought upon the subject had formulated in her mind. Her purpose in doing this was to have the letter all ready to send to Plainfield should he fail to come over as expected that evening.

When the hour arrived for the carriage to return to



town, Kate told her mother that, to obviate the crowding in the vehicle, she would remain at home with Betty, and, Mrs. Barry assenting, they drove away just as the sun was setting, for the lecture, as announced, was to begin at eight o'clock, and would probably occupy an hour to an hour and a half. When they had gone Kate brought down from her room the two volumes Mr. Harmon had brought her on the occasion of his last visit, and placed them upon the table in the parlor so that she might not forget to return them, and then, with her *Imitation of Christ* in her hand, she took her place on one of the side seats at the front door, and sought to compose herself for the trial at hand from the spiritual counsels of her "little comforter," as she called it. She had not been sitting there very long when, upon looking down through the opening in the apple trees, she saw Mr. Harmon coming. As he drove into the yard, she went over to the driveway, and summoning all her good purposes, greeted him as usual.

Upon halting his horse, Mr. Harmon retained his seat in the buggy, and after returning Kate's salutation, said: "I propose that we take a drive, and get all the air there is on such an evening as this."

"Oh, thank you, but I don't see really how I can go," answered Kate, "for there's no one in the house but Betty."

"Well," he urged, "she's no child, and anyway, we'll not be gone long." As Kate stood in hesitation, he looked at his watch and added: "Come, I'll return you here in an hour and a half, or sooner if you say so."

"Well," answered Kate rather reluctantly. "I'll speak to Betty, and be ready in just a minute."

As she disappeared within the house, Mr. Harmon drove into the yard beyond, and turning around, drew up



at the porch as Kate reappeared ready to accompany him. As they turned from the driveway into the road, he asked: "Which way would you like to go?"

"I have no preference," answered Kate, "only don't go too far."

"Well, if you have no choice, we'll go up by the red mill," said Mr. Harmon, "and then, if there's time enough, we'll drive around by the doctor's on the way back."

When they reached the old red mill, Kate said that she thought it would take too long to go up over the hill to the doctor's.

"Very well," said Mr. Harmon, "we'll drive in to the 'flat rock,' and after a short stop, get back to the house at the appointed time."

The "flat rock" was a picturesque spot frequented by luncheon parties, picnickers, or people taking an outing for the day, and was so called from a large flat-topped rock deposited there near the river by some prehistoric cataclysm. The place was reached by a lane that turned in from the road, a short distance above the mill, and was situated near the head of the dam where the stream, after coming over the ripples in a sort of ravine above, glided into still water which backed up from the milldam, a distance of two hundred feet or more. The ground was shaded by maples and elms, and several fine old willows overhanging the stream. Rude tables stood about here and there, and seats were made by cutting in between the trees the ends of planks, and nailing a strip across from tree to tree for a back support.

When they alighted here, Kate walked over to the river's edge while Mr. Harmon tied his horse to a tree, and standing there looking down at the water the thought came to her that here she should make known the reasons that compelled her to deny him longer her company, and



at last to relieve her heart by opening a new wound in it. But instantly foreseeing the misery of the drive home afterwards, in the unhappy state of mind the occasion was likely to bring to both of them, she determined to postpone the matter till just before reaching the house on the return trip. Perceiving Mr. Harmon coming toward her, she turned from the water's edge and seated herself on a bench near by. Some eight or ten paces distant Mr. Harmon halted, and after looking at her some moments with a pleased light in his eyes, said: "This spot makes an appropriate setting for your beauty and your personality."

Kate was startled and for a moment embarrassed, for never before had she heard him make any comment whatever upon her personal appearance. "How complimentary you are, Mr. Harmon!" she said, looking away across the river to recover from her confusion. Turning in a moment toward him with recovered eyes, she continued: "I have never been here at this hour before, and I must say that as greatly as I have always admired it, this place never appeared to me so charming as it does this evening."

As she said this, he seated himself beside her, and looking across river and valley to where the purpled hills were losing their sharp outline in the fading sky, and lilac-tinted clouds were slowly changing to blue and black, he continued: "Don't charge me with uttering empty compliment when I say that as the beauty of that sunset reflects the glory of the sun, so yours is the reflex of your heart and mind."

As he turned to look at her, Kate pressed her handkerchief to her blushing face, exclaiming: "Why, Mr. Harmon, how very flattering you are determined to be this evening!"



"I intend no flattery," he returned, tossing his hat on the grass, "it has been well said that beauty is becoming only when it is the outward manifestation of a pure heart and a cultivated mind." Turning so as to look directly at Kate, who had pushed to the end of the bench, and was sitting with her back against the tree, he continued, drawing closer to her: "measured by the same standard, I know how well your beauty becomes you, and I have admired it not alone for what it is, but for what shone through it," Kate, blushing deeply, dropped her eyes as he went on: "and ever since I came to know you well, I want to tell you now that you have had my admiration," taking her hand, "yes, Kate, and more, my heart's worship, my love ——"

"Don't, Mr. Harmon! stop, please!" cried Kate, withdrawing her hand, her bosom heaving with emotion, "it can never be!" and covering her scarlet face with her hands, she bowed her head while Mr. Harmon, checking himself abruptly and leaning back in his seat, looked at her in astonishment.

After a silence of some moments, Kate wiped her eyes, and pressing her handkerchief against her chin, began without looking up: "Pardon me, Mr. Harmon, for several days I have had something to tell you, but there was no opportunity till to-day, except by writing, and I put it off as long as I could." Pausing, she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes a moment, and then continued: "If I had only had the heart or the courage to let you know at once, this would never have happened," and again pressing her handkerchief to her face, she bowed her head while Mr. Harmon looked on in amazement.

After a few moments of silence, without changing his attitude, he said: "I am ready to hear it now."

Something in the tone of his voice had an instantly



sobering effect upon Kate, who dropped her hands into her lap, and glancing at him, said: "I know, of course, that you are a Protestant, while I am a Catholic, but I never gave it a thought until my mother spoke of it the other day, and said I was not doing right to encourage your attention, although I never considered it more than friendly. I must say that at first I thought she looked at it altogether too seriously, but the more I considered it, the more it seemed to me she was probably right in view of the way she looked at it. Now, after what has happened here so unexpected by me, I see that she was right in looking farther than I did." As she paused, she wiped her eyes, and dropping her hands upon her lap, pulled her handkerchief this way and that with her eyes turned upon it.

"My views of religion," said Mr. Harmon, "are not of deliberate choosing, my belief is not subject to my will—but I need not apologize for my belief nor my disbelief, most assuredly to one who looks to another to think for her."

As he said this, he picked up his hat, and placing it upon his head with a slight tilt over his eyes, drew out his watch and after glancing at it, replaced it in his pocket without comment.

Rising to her feet, Kate said: "Mr. Harmon, I do not blame you for anything: you have a right to think and believe for yourself. I know you are honest in your belief, whatever it may be. To me, my religion is more than life, and I could never suffer anything to lessen my confidence in it."

As she said this, Mr. Harmon turned, and without a word walked slowly and with downcast face, over to his horse, and untying it, turned the vehicle around and looking toward Kate, said: "Well, I guess we're ready."



When she came over to him, he helped her into the buggy, and seating himself beside her, drove along the lane and out upon the road without a word. Down by the old grist-mill and out around on the mill road they went in silence, each evidently absorbed in thought and apparently indifferent to the presence of the other. The only word uttered was when Mr. Harmon urged his horse to a faster pace as he sped along the road through the thickening shadows of early night. When they came in sight of the Barry homestead, Kate broke the silence by asking: "What time is it, please?"

Looking at his watch he answered: "It is a quarter past nine."

Again they lapsed into silence which was unbroken till they turned into the driveway at the house, when Kate said: "I have your books ready, and I will hand them to you if you will wait just a moment."

"All right," he answered, as he pulled up at the porch, where Kate stepped out of the buggy and darted into the house. After turning around in the yard, he drew up at the porch again where Kate reappeared and handed to him the volumes. Then extending her hand, she said: "I hope we can always be good friends."

"I hope so," he returned, taking the tips of her fingers in his hand, and following this immediately with "good-night," he started off while Kate stood looking after him. As he disappeared in the road, another vehicle drove into view, and recognizing the familiar sound as that of the family carriage, she quickly withdrew into the house and ran upstairs to her room.



## CHAPTER XVII.

Frank Dunn's neighbor, Bill Stevens, had in his employ a farm hand named Johnson. He was about thirty years of age, short, thickset and sturdy. Judged by the color of his skin, hair, eyes and his features, he was not more than one quarter negro, whereas the slouching gait, the furtive look, and the explosive, husky laugh, peculiar to the African, were as characteristically marked in him as though no strain whatever of white blood mingled with the current of his dusky forefathers. He was a good worker, and because of his great strength, competent as a desirable helper at the heaviest of farm work. Like the people of the negro race, he was simple-minded, easily amused and as easily offended, and the owner of a temper and a vindictive spirit that at times showed itself in absurdities. On one occasion when he stumbled and fell over a wheelbarrow in the dark, he caught up an axe, and smashed the barrow in his rage into kindling wood; and on another occasion when a barn door, swung round by the wind, struck him from behind unawares and threw him down, he sprang to his feet and fiercely belabored the door with a shovel which he happened to have in his hand, till the handle parted and his vengeance was satisfied. He had been in Bill Stevens' employ something over a year, although on several occasions very near his discharge when his temper and that of his employer, too much alike, rose in conflict. These collisions were most frequent when either or both of them had had recourse to the cider barrel which "Bill," as he was generally known, always kept on tap in the



cellar during "hayin' 'n harvestin'," and on other occasions when difficult or unusually heavy labor justified, in his mind, a resort to stimulants.

In the afternoon of a very hot day in the week following the incidents narrated in the preceding chapter, and when the haying season was about half over, Bill Stevens backed his team out of the barn, where a load of hay had just been pitched off, and was turning about to go afield for another, when Johnson jumped over the side of the hayrack saying: "I'm goin' over to th' well to git a drink—you go on, I'll ketch ye."

Bill looked after him with suspicion in his eyes, and after going a short distance into the field, he brought his team around out of the course to the top of a little knoll from which, by standing up in the wagon, he could see the outside entrance to the cellar over the tops of the cherry trees along the garden. As he looked, he saw Johnson emerge from the cellar, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand, and, with a furtive glance at a nearby window, hurry across the yard toward the field. Drawing his team around quickly, Bill resumed his way to the field beyond, where the hay in long windrows awaited him. Halting his team there, he began to "bunch" the hay preparatory to "loading" it on the wagon, and was so engaged when Johnson came up.

"Goin' to load er d'ye want me to 'bunch up,' too?" he called out to Bill.

"I want you," returned Bill in angry tones, "to drink water when ye say yer goin' to, an' let that cider alone!"

"Who's bin drinkin' cider?" retorted Johnson. "I ain't bin drinkin' none."

"What d'ye want to say that fer?" sang out Bill, stopping his work, his anger mounting, "I know better, fer I see ye with my own eyes!"



"It's a darned lie," grumbled Johnson, quailing somewhat before Bill's fury, as he began pitching the hay into a heap.

Although uttered in a lower tone, Bill, watching him intently, heard what he said, and grasping his fork in both hands he rushed toward Johnson, exclaiming: "Did you say I lied, ye lying nigger sneak you!"

Johnson made no reply, but seizing his pitchfork a la musket-charge, as Bill came within reach, he made a tremendous lunge at him, driving both tines into his body with such force that, as Bill fell, Johnson's weight on the fork, as the tines struck into the ground through Stevens' body, broke the handle off in the middle, and he also went down almost on top of his victim. As the fork entered his body, Bill uttered a loud, piercing shriek that echoed over the fields. Springing to his feet, Johnson jerked the fork from the prostrate form, and with alarm on his ashy face, looked toward the house, and then in a circle, scanning all around the fields, wholly disregarding the dying groans of the man at his feet. Going quickly to the wagon, he sprang into it, and standing tip-toe on the highest part of the rack, again scanned with searching eyes first toward the house and then all over the fields in every direction. After looking and listening for some moments, confidence displacing the alarm in his face, he leaped out of the wagon, and going over to the body, stooped down and looking at it a moment, shook it by the shoulder as he called in low but emphatic tones: "Bill! Bill! I say, Bill!" But there was no response, and as renewed alarm spread over his face, he mounted the wagon again and looked in all directions, and listened and looked again. Again jumping down from the wagon and going to the body, he stooped and opened the shirt-front to see where the wounds were



made, and put his hand in over the heart and felt here and there as if for its beating. As he withdrew his hand all bloody, he wiped it roughly on the grass, and picking up the broken fork, placed the fractured ends together in coaptation, studied them a few moments and then threw them in on the wagon bottom, and taking the fork from the hand of the man now dead, he pitched on a quantity of hay, covering the broken fork and filling one end of the hayrack. Then going to the body, he lifted it upon his shoulder and carrying it over to the wagon, placed it on top of the hay already pitched on. Then, after another search of the fields from the top of the rack, he pitched on more hay, filling higher the other end of the rack, and lifted the body again over on that, proceeding in that way till he had put on a full load of hay with the body lying on top of it all. Then he drove across the field, but not in the direction of the barn, to a "bar-way" in the fence, and through this across a field from which the hay had been taken the day before, and drew up in a secluded spot very close to the line fence between the Stevens and the Dunn farms. After a quick look from the top of the hay load in all directions, he rolled the body to the edge of the load, and then pushed it off so that it fell into the berry bushes on the Dunn side of the fence. Sitting low in the hay, he then drove to the barn and in between the mows, quite satisfied that he had not seen nor been seen by anybody. When he had unloaded the hay, he pried up a plank from the barn floor and threw in the broken fork. Observing blood stains on one of the bottom boards of the hayrack, he drew it out and secreted that also beneath the floor and readjusted the plank securely. Replacing the bottom board taken from the rack by another picked up near the fence outside, he drove back to the field and



went on alone with drawing in the hay until "milking time," when he put the horses in the stable, and going to the pasture across the road, brought the cows into the milking yard. Then he went in to supper, and to Mrs. Stevens' inquiry as to where her husband was, he replied: "He went over to th' line fence to see Dunn 'bout th' commons, an' I guess they're havin' 'nother row, fer I could hear 'em jawin' clear over 'n th' pasture." This appeared so probable and sufficiently satisfactory to Mrs. Stevens, that she made no further comment nor inquiry, and, supper over, helped as usual with the milking, wondering all the time why Bill should remain away so long.

When the milking was done, she said to Johnson: "I wish you'd go an' see why Bill don't come."

"All right," returned Johnson.

Leaving the house, he crossed the yard, and when beyond the barn, looking around and seeing no one watching him, he went directly across the fields to where the body lay, and, after leaning on the fence and looking at it a moment lying there in the bushes, he returned leisurely till he passed the barn, when assuming an expression of excitement, he ran through the yard to the house, exclaiming as Mrs. Stevens appeared in the doorway, "Bill's murdered; Dunn's killed him!"

At hearing this, Mrs. Stevens began to scream and wring her hands, crying out: "Where is he? tell me where he is!"

"He's over by th' line fence," said Johnson, his eyes dilating in well-feigned terror.

Snatching her bonnet from a nail in the wall, she hurried into the yard, exclaiming: "My poor husband! show me where he is!"

At this moment a passing team halted in the road, and



one of the two occupants called out: "What's the matter, Mrs. Stevens?"

But Mrs. Stevens seeing them, only cried and screamed the louder, as she demanded again to be shown where her husband was.

"Bill's been murdered," shouted Johnson to the men in the buggy, upon which they both leaped out and, fastening the horse, came into the dooryard with faces aghast as they asked to be told more about it.

"I guess," answered Johnson, "Bill an' Dunn's had another row, an' Dunn's killed him."

Johnson leading the way, they all hastened to the spot where the body lay. After her first paroxysm of grief over it, Mrs. Stevens was led to one side and comforted by one of the farmers, while the other, with Johnson, examined the body.

"Sure enough," said the neighbor, "he's bin shot: see where the bullets struck him, an' went clean through an' come out in his back!"

"Yes sir," said Johnson, "two holes; he was shot twice, wasn't he?"

As they stepped out of the bushes, they looked toward the Dunn farmhouse and saw Frank, who had been attracted by the woman's screaming, standing in the rear of his barn gazing toward them.

"There he is now," said the man with Johnson, "let's call him over here," whereupon he shouted and beckoned till Frank began to come toward them.

As he drew near, the man said: "This is a bad matter, Frank, an' I guess you're in fer trouble."

"How's that?" inquired Frank in astonishment, "what's this all about, anyway?"

"I guess you know!" exclaimed Mrs. Stevens, empha-



sizing the "you," "and you'll pay for it with your life—to murder my poor husband, you wicked, wicked man!"

For a moment Frank could not find his tongue, and as he stood there with blanched face, those looking at his embarrassment saw, as they supposed, the consternation of guilt.

"Why, Mr. Tuttle," said Frank at length, addressing more directly the one nearest him, "what has happened here, anyway?"

"Go and look in the bushes there," the man answered, pointing with his finger, "and you'll see where he fell."

After a short look at the body, Frank returned with a look of horror transfixing his face as he asked: "When did this happen, and how did it happen?"

"Well, you'd ought to know," answered Mr. Tuttle.

"I'd ought to know!" exclaimed Frank, "why, how would I know anything about it?"

"Oh, we ain't goin' to hold the trial here now, but I guess in due time you'll have a chance to tell all about it."

"Why man, you're crazy!" said Frank.

"Well, I rather think you'll wish you were before you get through with this," returned Mr. Tuttle.

Seeing how determined they all were to charge him with what seemed an awful crime, nothing of which could he comprehend, and becoming consequently very much alarmed, he set off toward the house without another word.

When he had gone, Johnson said, with a gleam of triumphant satisfaction in his eyes: "He looked scart, didn't he?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Tuttle, "he's scared enough, although he pretends not to know anything about it."

To Mrs. Stevens' urgent appeals that the body be taken to the house, the two men objected, that it should



remain where it was till seen by the coronor, but she would listen to nothing of the sort, and ordered Johnson to "hitch up the spring wagon" and bring it over as quickly as he could. When it arrived, the body was laid in it and conveyed to the house, where, assisted by the two neighbors, Mrs. Stevens sat by it, while Johnson set off in the night to inform the neighborhood and to bring the coronor.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

As Frank entered the house with terror and excitement in his face and manner, his sister Mary exclaimed: "Why Frank! what's the matter?"

Making no reply, he passed into the sitting-room where his mother was unravelling old woolen socks and winding the yarn into a ball. With his hat pushed back on his head, he sat down opposite the old woman, and as she stopped her work, upon seeing him closer, with inquiry upon her lips, he said: "Well, mother, something terrible has happened, and I'm afraid I'm going to get into trouble."

Mary, who had followed to the door, upon hearing him say that, came into the room and dropped into a chair as the old woman, pushing her spectacles up over her forehead, asked with sympathetic anxiety in her voice: "Why Frank, avick, fwhat is it?"

"A little while ago," began Frank, sitting on the edge of his chair, with his hands on his knees, "I heard screams away over in the lots, and I went across the road and out behind the far barn, and from there I could see people away down by the line fence acting as if something was the matter. So I went down to where they were, and there I saw Bill Stevens lying dead by the fence in the bushes, and Mrs. Stevens there taking on, and Johnson and Mr. Tuttle and Alf. Bingham." At this, both women clasped their hands in horrified astonishment, with pious exclamations of invocation for protection. Frank continued: "When I tried to talk with them about it, why," said Frank, lifting both hands



into the air, "they acted as if I had killed the man!" Here again exclamations of horror escaped the women, and Mary, leaving her seat, went over and stood by her mother's chair, facing Frank. "Now," he continued, "this is going to make an awful excitement and lots of trouble, and I feel just like going off somewhere to keep out of it till it is all cleared up, for God knows, I don't know a thing about it."

"No, no, Frank," said his mother, shaking her head, the tears coming into her eyes, "don't think o' that, shtan yer groun me son; they can't touch ye, let them do theyre besht."

"How was he killed?" asked Mary.

"I couldn't find out," answered Frank, "the only answer they'd give me was that they guessed I knew all about it! It's awful!" said Frank, almost to himself, as he wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. Addressing his mother and sister again, he went on: "The worst of it is, everybody knows we've had words several times, and considerable trouble about the line fence, and a good many of the neighbors have taken his side, because he talks a good deal and tells the story his own way. Now, they'll be ready to believe anything they hear about me in this affair, so that if I stay, I don't see anything but trouble and expense to clear myself."

At this the old woman gave way to her tears, and Mary, after a few words to comfort her, asked: "Would ye be gone fer long, Frank?"

"Oh, no," he answered, rising from his chair, and walking nervously up and down the room, "not long, for they are going to clear this matter up right away, you may be sure, and then, I'll come back and escape all this trouble and suspicion—why," stopping and coming round in front of the two women, "with the way



they talked to me and the way they're going to now, I'd be ashamed to meet anybody in the road!"

Notwithstanding the repeated protests of his mother, Frank, assisted by Mary's uncertainty as to what to say, finally persuaded the old woman that his temporary absence would save them all much annoyance and trouble, and began at once to make ready.

"I'll tell David," he said, as he hung up his straw hat and began unbuttoning his blouse, "to get one of the Leonard boys to help finish the haying, and I'll be back in time for harvesting."

"Where'd ye think ye'll go?" asked Mary, dusting with her apron a large, old-fashioned hand bag that had seen service only twice before in twelve years.

"I'm going to have David drive me down to High Falls this evening, and from there Uncle Peter'll carry me over to-morrow to cousin Tom's in Rockland County. If you write, you'd better direct it to Uncle Peter, and I'll tell him to put it in another envelope and send it to cousin Tom."

Supper was delayed till every detail of preparation had been made, and the horses harnessed all ready for the journey. Soon after dark, wagons began to pass in unusual frequency up and down the road, going to and returning from the Stevens house. Frank went to the front window of the sitting-room twice, and after looking out cautiously, returned each time saying that the people passing looked at the house "as if to see ghosts in it" as they went by, and he became more and more nervous and impatient to get away. "Let them," he said to his mother, sitting in her old rocking-chair, weeping and imploring heaven to "direct him to fwhat was besht," "find out without dragging us into it, how this happened and who did it, as you may be very sure they



will mighty quick, and then I'll be back perhaps within a few days or a week. If I'm here, why, the way matters stand, I'll be hauled into it right off, and then I'd have to bear the disgrace of it, and clear myself before they'd take the thought or the trouble to look after the one that did it. If they can't satisfy themselves on me, they'll be more likely to get on the right track at once and the whole thing'll be straightened out right away."

There was one other argument of greatest influence which Frank kept to himself, but which had most to do in determining him in the course he was about to take. John Harmon, on several occasions, had shown his dislike for Frank, not only in his personal demeanor, but also in a business way as counsel for Bill Stevens, and by lending his political influence in opposition to Frank's candidacy for the supervisorship. More recently, as a matter of fact since Kate's refusal, of which Frank was in total ignorance, John Harmon had gone out of his way, as Frank looked at it, to cause him trouble, and his personal dislike seemed to be greater than ever. As district attorney now, Frank knew that the occasion favored him with an opportunity in which there was nothing to expect but all the trouble the circumstance would warrant from one who hated him as a jealous rival. The satisfaction which he believed John Harmon would enjoy in being qualified by his office and the present unexpected circumstances, to proceed publicly and without reserve to harass and humiliate him, was what he particularly wished to escape from and to deny him.

About ten o'clock, Frank took leave of his weeping mother and sister, and accompanied by David, drove rapidly away to High Falls, with a strange half sense of being a fugitive from the officers of the law. As they went on, the night grew darker, and as the lights went



out in the farm houses along the road, with a growing sense of relief and security Frank began to talk more freely to David. "When you go back," he said to him, "take the other road across the river and go on up to Plainfield and call at the post office—it'll probably be nine o'clock by the time you get there to-morrow. Then get the new handrake I told you to, and a sack of dairy salt and then go on home. If anybody asks where I am, you tell them I had to go to High Falls, but that I'll be back in a few days."

The rattle of Frank's carriage wheels had scarcely died in the distance, when two men in a buggy drove up to the house. Mary saw them through the window, and with a feeling of alarm stood in the middle of the floor awaiting their coming. When they knocked, she smoothed down her hair with her hands and clearing her throat went to the door.

"Is Frank in?" asked one of the men.

"No, he isn't," said Mary.

"Where is he?" again asked the man.

"I don't just know," she answered.

"Well," asked the man, "how soon'll he be back?"

"I couldn't say," said Mary, shaking her head.

After a pause, in which the men looked at each other, the one making the inquiries said: "If you think he'll be back in an hour, we'll go in and wait for him."

"Well ye needn't," returned Mary, "fer he may be back to-night, an' he may not till to-morrow."

At this, the men looked at each other again, and after a moment the speaker said: "Well, we'll call again," and turning from the door, they went toward the buggy.

As Mary, after locking the door, turned toward her mother, the old woman asked: "Fwhat did they want?"

"They wanted to see Frank," answered Mary, as she



drew down the window-shade near the table at which her mother was sitting.

"Who were they?" again asked the old woman.

"I don't know," said Mary, seating herself opposite her mother, "but I'm sure I've seen one o' them about Plainfield."

An hour later, as they were preparing to retire, they were startled by a knock again at the door. Hastily putting on a wrapper, Mary went into the sitting-room, and standing near the door without opening it, called out: "Who is it?"

"Well," came from the outside, "I was here a little while ago—has Frank got back yet?"

"No, he hasn't," curtly returned Mary.

Then there was a long silence, so long that Mary, thinking they had gone, was about to return to her mother, when the man outside said: "All right, we won't disturb you again to-night," and listening, she heard them drive away in the direction of the Stevens house.

The next morning, while Mary was in the barn-yard milking, the same man who had called at the door the evening before, came upon her so suddenly and so stealthily that he seemed to have come up out of the ground. To his renewed inquiries for Frank, she answered much as she did the night before. After standing about for awhile, he went away, but came into the yard again as the milking was finished and, walking about among the cows, disappeared this time without saying anything.

Later, when David drove up to the house about ten o'clock, he had hardly halted the horses before two men came up to him from somewhere about the house, and two others approached from the barn.



"Where's Frank?" asked one.

"He's in High Falls," answered David.

"When's he coming home?" he continued.

"In a day or two," David answered, "at least, that's what he told me."

"Well," said the man, drawing a paper from his inside coat pocket and handing it to David, "you are subpoenaed as a witness at the coroner's inquest," looking at his watch, "immediately at Mr. Stevens' house. You'd better drive right on up there, or you'll be late."

David jumped out of the wagon and going to the door, explained to Mary what she had been watching from the window, and then drove over to the Stevens house.

There he found a great crowd gathered from all the country round, and the coronor's jury ready to begin its work. David was the first witness.

Question: "How long have you been in Mr. Dunn's employ?"

Answer: "Nearly five years."

"Did you ever have any trouble with Dunn?"

"No, sir."

"Isn't he a man of pretty quick temper?"

"Not any worse than people average, I should say."

"Has Dunn got a gun?"

"Yes, sir."

"What kind of a gun is it?"

"Shot gun."

"Did he go hunting sometimes?"

"Yes, once in a while."

"What kind of shot did he use?"

"Common shot."

"Didn't he use buckshot sometimes?"

"Maybe he did, I don't know."

"Did he own a pistol?"

"Not that I know of."



"Were you with Dunn yesterday?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much of the time?"

"All day, 'cept when I went after the cows."

"What were you doing?"

"Cuttin' grass and drawin' in hay."

"Do you know where Dunn is now?"

"Yes, he's in High Falls."

"When did he go there?"

"Last night."

"Do you know why he went away?"

"No, sir."

"When is he coming back?"

"He said he'd be back in a few days."

After some questioning to draw out what David knew of the disagreements and ill-feeling between Frank and Stevens, he was released.

The coronor was an old-time country doctor whose medical knowledge was entirely a matter of experience, and whose performances in surgery rarely went beyond lancing gums in teething babies, and the occasional pricking of a felon. After an adjournment to visit the spot where the body was found, the examination of Johnson was taken up, who swore that Dunn and Stevens were in angry altercation at the line fence when he drove to the barn with the last load of hay, and that a little later he heard a gun discharged twice in the direction of the place where he later discovered the body. All of this, and other adjuvating testimony together with the fact that Frank had evidently fled the country, was so conclusive that a verdict was promptly found, viz: that Bill Stevens came to his death by being shot through the body by a firearm in the hands of Frank Dunn. On this finding, a warrant was issued for Frank's arrest, and put into the hands of the sheriff at High Falls.



## CHAPTER XIX.

The report of Bill Stevens' murder, as it spread over the countryside, was most exciting to a people unaccustomed to the tragic incidents of life, and of most astounding interest because of the connection with it of Frank Dunn's name. Wherever known, and the circle of his acquaintance was large, Frank theretofore had been regarded generally as a model young man, one of the prosperous and promising farmers of the county, whose reputation had been of the best and whose character among the highest. In the small circle of Bill Stevens' friends his good name had suffered somewhat, but even among these, Bill's influence and their friendship for him had not been sufficient to blind them wholly to the fact that Frank stood high in the esteem of the best people of the county. In the smaller circle where he was known intimately, it was admitted that, under great provocation, he was inclined to lose control of his temper, and this knowledge, now, had much to do, as far as it went, in depressing the hopes of his friends that future events might establish his innocence.

At mass on the following Sunday, Father Logan made very marked, though indirect allusion to Frank in his talk to the people.

"Whin I was comin' to this counthry," he said, "I thought I was comin' to do mission work among people who had become indifferent to their faith in a strange land, but whin I got here," smiling broadly, as over a joke, "I found thim all missionaries! I found some that were even betther than the priest himself, in their zeal.



But," he went on, becoming fiercely serious and nodding his head first at one side of the congregation and then at the other, "look out for the people that are too good, look out for them! for they are like sheep in wolves' clothing, and they'll bring shame and disgrace to ye sooner or later!"

As he went on in this way, the eyes of half the congregation were turned toward Mrs. Dunn and Mary, who sat shrinking into the corner of their pew with heads bowed in weeping and confusion. So overwhelmed was the old woman by this unlooked for humiliation that, after church, she was unable to reach her carriage without assistance, and upon arriving at home was utterly prostrated and took to her bed. In a day or two a latent kidney affection developed serious proportions, and the doctor who was called, recognizing the gravity of the condition, said that at best she would be a long time in recovering, even if such issue be the ultimate outcome.

The report of the disaster to Frank's good name awakened no greater sympathy and sorrow anywhere than it did in the Barry household, where it was grieved over as sincerely as though it were an affair of their own. For many years the old people had held each other in closest bonds of disinterested friendship, and the children of both families had grown up regarding each other more with the affection of relationship than as mere friends. Since her last meeting with Mr. Harmon, Kate had been noticeably serious and quiet in her manner, not evidently in consequence of being depressed or downcast, so much as the result of a kind of spiritual resignation. But in the days following Frank's flight from the country she became silent, dejected and sought to sit alone by herself in a sort of idle reverie so unlike her former self that her parents, although regarding it



as due to her sympathy for the Dunns and for Frank in particular, were made anxious by the changes wrought in her appearance. Their expectation that her depression would wear away in a few weeks was not realized as time went on, for, if anything, she became more reserved, and withdrew more to herself, spending a great deal of her time in reading religious books and in devotions before a little altar she had tastefully arranged in her bedroom.

One October afternoon, as she sat with her mother tying up flower seeds into little packets and carefully labelling them, she said, after a long silence not unusual in her recent manner: "Mother dear, I shall not be here to plant these seeds nor to watch their flowers bloom."

"Arrah, Katherine, asthore, fwhat makes ye say that?" asked her mother in tones of deepest affection, as she emptied a dish of hulls and pods into the basket at her side.

"Because," answered Kate without looking up from her work, "I'm going to a convent to be a nun."

Her mother continued her work in silence a few moments in a sort of half blind way, and then, placing the dish on the table, she put her apron to her eyes and leaning back in her chair began to weep. At this Kate dropped her work, and falling on her knees at her mother's side she put her arms about her neck and said, in a voice full of tenderest affection: "Don't cry, mother; you should be glad to have me go where my life will be spent in holiness and good work, away from the sin and snares and deception of this world." But this only increased her mother's emotion, seeing which, Kate ran upstairs and returned in a moment shaking out of its folds a clean handkerchief. Putting her arm around her mother's head, she drew the face upward and kiss-



ing it, wiped the tears away, and then kissing it again, said: "There now, be my dear, good mother, as you have always been and look on this as God's will and all for the best."

"I know, acushla," said her mother, "but how can I ever let you go?" weeping afresh into the handkerchief Kate had placed in her hands.

"Now, mother," said Kate, kneeling again at her side and putting her arm around her, "if I were to marry you would be pleased, wouldn't you, and have to part with me, don't you know?" looking into her face with a little smile, "then why should you grieve if I go to a life of devotion to God, some day to become a bride of Christ?"

After a few moments her mother, wiping her eyes, said: "I know, mavourneen, it's proud an' happy I ought to be, an' I will be whin I have a little time to think of it."

"That's a dear good mother," said Kate, kissing her, "I had no fears for you, but I wonder what father will say! You talk to him to-night about it when you are alone together and tell me in the morning what he says."

But she had not to wait upon hearing from her mother, for, upon going downstairs next morning, she met her father who, after looking at her in silence a moment, caught her in his arms and kissed her while tears overflowed upon his cheeks. This was so extraordinary in him, not at all demonstrative in his affection, that Kate was quite overcome by it, and sinking into a chair, buried her face in her handkerchief as the old man seized his hat and hurried out to the stable.

The decision thus made known to her parents had formed in Kate's mind in the week following Frank's disappearance. The termination of her pleasing rela-



tions with John Harmon, although a great trial to her, had nevertheless been borne with a certain degree of resignation because she found solace in the thought that, by that act, she had made such sacrifice for her religion as her pious soul commended. The world still seemed full of promise to her, and without determining how or why, she felt assurance in her heart of coming success and happiness. When calamity, however, fell upon the good name of Frank Dunn, she was overwhelmed by a sense of bereavement and a most absolute loss of confidence. In a most unexpected way the light faded out of her future, and the darkening prospect turned her pious soul to increased devotions and these to aspirations to quit the world altogether. She would go to a convent somewhere and seek to be a nun. But where, she did not know, nor how. With her new purpose yet a secret, she had gone to Father Logan, unknown to her parents, and sought of him such advice and information as would direct her in taking the first steps toward this change in her life which her heart and soul were now set upon. When the priest learned of her intention, he appeared strangely indifferent, and was inclined to laugh at her as she fervidly asserted her desire to leave the world and devote her life specially to God's service. However, as the result of her persistence, he became at length sufficiently serious to write for her a letter of introduction to the Mother Superior of the Convent of Our Lady of Hope at Marine City, four hundred miles distant. As he handed it to her, he said: "Whin yer goin' I'd advise ye to get a round thrip ticket, fer I'll wager ye'll be back within a fortnight."

Having secured the letter, Kate became most desirous of setting off at once, but there was yet the consent of



her parents to be obtained. For four or five days she had watched for the opportunity and the courage to make known her decision to her mother, and to temper the grief she anticipated and probable opposition into consent. At various times, during those days, when the opportunity was at hand her courage failed, and again when her resolve was made the circumstances were unfavorable. Having at length, however, as we have seen, made her purpose known to them, and having subsequently removed by gentle, pious entreaty every obstacle suggested by their wish to keep her with them, preparations for her departure were soon completed, and within ten days from her visit to the priest, she was within the walls of the convent.

On the day Kate left home the report went abroad that Mrs. Dunn was dead. The doctor said her death was caused by kidney affection; the people, that she had died of a broken heart. A telegram notifying Frank was sent away at once over the route followed by the letters, and his course left to his own choosing. On his cousin's farm, sequestered among the hills of far away Rockland County, he had remained all these weeks undiscovered by the officers of the law, who had searched for him diligently in every place where it was suspected he might be in hiding. From week to week he had hoped for word from home that would inform him of the detection of the guilty person and thereby a clearing of the way to his honorable return. When, instead, the information of his mother's death reached him, he was beside himself with grief, and becoming desperate, he determined to start for home immediately, regardless, of consequences. Arriving at High Falls at midnight, he besought his uncle to take him to his home that night without delay, so that he might look on his dead mother's



face before encountering the officers. Accordingly, they set off at once, and as they were approaching the old home in the gray dawn of early morning, they met Father Logan returning from a hurried call in the night to administer spiritual consolation to Mary who, worn out in attendance upon her mother and prostrated by her death, was thought to be dying by those about her. As the vehicles passed in the road, the priest gave Frank a frigid look of surprise, and drove on without returning the salutation Frank gave him.

Upon reaching Plainfield, the priest drove at once to the telegraph office, and sent a despatch to the sheriff at High Falls informing him of Frank's arrival home, and suggesting that he or an officer should come on and arrest him without loss of time. "I guess the people 'll know now that I am no part or partner of Frank Dunn and his pretinses, even if they have seen us together so much," said he to himself.

About noon that day, Frank was called into another room from his seat at the side of his mother's coffin, and placed under arrest by the sheriff, who had just arrived. At Frank's request, the officer kindly consented to delay return until the next day, in order to permit him to be present at his mother's funeral. That sad ceremony completed, he was taken to High Falls, where the formal proceedings were gone through with, and he was locked up to await trial in the month ensuing.



## CHAPTER XX.

In the week following Frank's arrest, Mrs. Stevens engaged Alf. Bingham, who was a sort of farmer carpenter, to shingle the north side of her barn, a job which Bill had made provision for the winter previous by having the shingles made and stacked near the barn to season during the summer, or until after haying and harvesting, when in the interim between cutting grain and the digging of potatoes he would find time to have them put on. Johnson, whom Mrs. Stevens continued in her employ, and whom the neighbors said was "actually makin' up to the widder," assisted Bingham at the work in the way of putting up staging, ripping off the old shingles and carrying up the new.

When the shingles had been "laid" well up toward the ridge, and Bingham was at work one afternoon fitting some new pieces about the base of the ventilator before bringing the new shingles up to it, his square dropped through the opening and fell toward the barn floor below. It so happened that at the time Johnson was for the moment absent and Bingham, descending the ladder, went in on the barn floor to recover the square. To his surprise, he failed to find it and, after looking about a few minutes and ranging with his eye the direction it took from the opening in the peak of the roof, he saw, upon looking closer, that it had struck between two of the planks and gone down through the floor. Seizing a crowbar, he pried up the planks and, as the space below was dark and not at once perceiving the missing tool, he threw the planks farther to one



side and stepping into the opening thus made clearer, saw the square lying there and beside it a broken pitchfork. Recovering his square, he picked up the pitchfork and was turning it over in his hands looking at it just as Johnson came into the barn. As Bingham looked up, he was surprised to see Johnson halt abruptly with a look of alarm spreading over his face and then, turning about without a word, hurry away out of the barn. Bingham stepped up out of the opening to the floor, and with the broken fork in his hand went to the door to learn where Johnson had gone in such a hurry. Not seeing him, he again looked at the fork and in the better light saw, unmistakably, blood stains upon it, and in two or three places near where the break occurred, the imprint of bloody fingers. This, although so extraordinary, suggested nothing, it simply excited his curiosity as he glanced about the yard to inquire of Johnson what it meant. Sticking the broken fork into the side of the haymow, he went back to replace the floor planks, but before doing so, looked in again and saw lying there the other half of the broken handle, and near by a bottom board of a hayrack. Picking up the piece of handle, he saw that it also bore the marks of bloody fingers, and as he looked in again more carefully in his increasing curiosity, he saw what looked like the stain of a pool of blood dried into the board. Drawing it out, he saw plainly that the blotch upon it was made by blood, and slowly it began to dawn upon him that this was in some way connected with Bill Stevens' murder. Was he shot while in the wagon? Hardly, for how came the body to be found across the fence on Dunn's land. Besides, he recalled that Johnson left Stevens at the line fence in a dispute with Dunn, and drove with his load of hay to the barn. Why were these things secreted,



anyway! It was strange, and the more he thought of it, the more his interest and curiosity grew. When Johnson came around he would ask about it, and so thinking, he laid the board along the floor at one side, and after replacing the planks, went up to his work at the ventilator.

When he quit work that evening at "chore time," not having yet seen Johnson about, he went to the house and asked Mrs. Stevens if she knew where he was.

"Why no," said she, "he came in a while ago in a kind of hurry and got his rifle and went on the run over across the pasture. I thought likely he was after something."

Bingham said nothing about his discovery, but as he crossed the fields to his own house, his mind was busy guessing some probable connection between the blood stained fork and the shooting of Bill Stevens, and to account for its being hidden away under the floor.

When he returned to work the next morning, everything was just as when he left the evening before. There was the broken fork sticking in the haymow, and there the piece of handle and the bottom board with its ugly blood stain on the floor. To his inquiries at the house, Mrs. Stevens replied that she had seen nothing of Johnson since he ran across the pasture with his rifle under his arm the day before, and she was quite "put out" by his sudden going off and leaving her to do all the milking and other chores alone.

While at work upon the roof some time later, not busier with his hands than with his thoughts, now stimulated anew by Johnson's long absence, George Baldwin, a butcher of Plainfield and one of Frank's fast friends, drove up and, coming into the barnyard called out to Bingham on the roof, asking for Johnson's whereabouts.



"I came up after a fat critter I bought of him last week, en 'Id like to see him," he said.

Bingham came down the ladder, and with his mind filled with what he had thus far failed to unravel and had not, for want of opportunity, spoken of to anyone, he showed the fork and bottom board to Baldwin, explaining how and where he found them.

"You say," asked Baldwin after carefully examining them, "that Johnson cleared out when he saw ye pickin' these things up?"

"Yes," answered Bingham, "and he hasn't turned up yit."

After another scrutiny of the stained board and the fork, Baldwin turned to Bingham as he said, with a triumphant ring of confidence in his voice: "You've made a discovery thet's of bigger 'mportance then you've eny idee, now mark what I tell ye."

"How so?" asked Bingham in an amazed sort of way.

"Well sir, I'll tell ye right now that I b'lieve Bill Stevens was killed with that thare fork," pointing at it very vigorously, "an' thet Johnson's th' man thet did it!"

"You don't think so!" said Bingham in tones of wonder, as he turned about to look, in this new light, at the fork and the wagon board.

"Thet's what I do," asserted Baldwin very decidedly, "he was never shot by Frank Dunn nor by enybody else, he was stabbed with that fork, and if Coronor Fink knew enything, he'd a known th' difference between holes made by bullets and holes made by a pitchfork!"

Jumping into his wagon, Baldwin drove away at a rapid pace toward Plainfield, stopping as he reached the Dunn farm long enough to tell Mary of what he had just seen and heard at Stevens', and gladdening her



heart with the assurance that within forty-eight hours the crime with which Frank was charged would be "put where it belongs." Spreading the news of the discovery about the village, Baldwin stirred up great reawakened interest in the affair, and readily gathering together a party of five, including the constable, no time was lost in hastening back to the Stevens farm. There they found that Bingham had meantime told Mrs. Stevens of Baldwin's suspicion and they were consequently met by her protest and opposition in any proposition to charge the murder of her husband to Johnson, who had been "so good and faithful and thought so much of Bill."

"All right," said Baldwin, "come on boys ! let's find him anyway; he's missin', and somebody's got ter look him up."

Leaving one of the party in charge of the team, they started off across the pasture in the direction taken by Johnson, toward the woods at the far end. Reaching the timber, they spread out so as to make a wide sweep, and then pushed on through the woods, over logs and through underbrush, for some distance, then up a sharp bluff to a sort of plateau where there was an extensive "sugar bush" of fine old maples. Sweeping through this, they halted at the sugar-house where they found indications that gave them confidence of being on Johnson's trail. The door had been forced open, there were traces of a recent fire in which corn and potatoes had been roasted, and more conclusive still, a fragment of the Farmer, bearing date of the Saturday preceding.

"I'm satisfied, boys," said Baldwin, "that Johnson staid here last night, and I'm of the 'pinion thet he's makin' fer 'nother sugar-house ter stay in to-night. If he's pintin' fer th' railroad, an' I think he is, he'll keep



right on over Hunt's hill and—lemme see," after a moment's thought, "he'll prob'ly fetch up somewhere about Sabins' to-night. If he's makin' fer Oakdale, where his folks live, he'll cut out o' th' woods somewhere near th' covered bridge ter go 'cross. Davis, you go back an' bring th' team round to White's store where we'll meet ye, an' then we'll go on down to purty clus to Sabins' afore we strike fer th' woods agin."

As they went on after Davis had left them, Baldwin said: "I'd give good money fer a bloodhound now, but seein' thar aint eny, we've got to do our own smellin' an' keep ter this trail, seein' we're on to it."

It was nearly sundown when they reached Sabins', where they left the horses to be fed, and, after procurin' supper and providing themselves with a lantern, which they carried unlighted, they set off on foot toward the hills again, along a wood-road or trail that wound its way through the fields and along the hillside to a sugar bush something over a mile distant. When they had reached the edge of the woods near the top of the hill, it was already growing dark, and after a short conference it was decided to go into the timber slowly and quietly in "Indian file" straight toward the sugar-house till within three or four hundred feet of it, and then to form a circle around it and close in. When the head of the little line arrived in range with the sugar-house, a speck of light was seen like a star lost in the woods, and, notwithstanding that their plans and movements had all been made in expectation of overtaking Johnson at this place, they were thrown into as great excitement upon seeing the light as if they had come upon him unexpectedly.

"Now boys," said Baldwin in low tones, halting the men as they came up, "we've got ter perceed accordin'



to som systim, an' th' fust thing fer us to find out after surroundin' is whether it's Johnson in there or some tramp. Soon's you git round th' house, I'll sneak up to th' winder an' git a peek at him afore we say a word, fer if it's Johnson, he's got a gun with him, ye know, an' he may get ugly an' show fight."

The windows of the sugar-house had all been boarded up at the close of the sugar season except one, and over this, something had been hung on the inside, so covering it that no light escaped from the interior except at one point near a lower corner, where a small area of uncovered glass allowed the speck of light they had seen to show through.

When the men had arranged themselves about the place, Baldwin crept up cautiously, and peeking through the bit of uncovered glass, saw Johnson sitting inside, in his shirt sleeves and barefooted, apparently nursing a sore foot. So helpless and harmless did the fellow appear, that Baldwin went directly to the door and knocking boldly, paused for an answer. None coming, he knocked again, and, after a pause, again much louder, as he called out: "Open up, Johnson, we know yer here!" Still there was no reply and no sound whatever from the inside. Calling two of the men nearest to come to his aid, Baldwin again called out: "Open this door or we'll break it in!" Receiving no reply, they all put their shoulders to the door and began to force it, when a shot rang out from the inside and one of the men, falling back from the door, cried out: "I'm shot!" Retiring promptly to a safe distance, they found that the bullet had passed through the flesh above the elbow at the outer side of the arm with seemingly no injury to the bone or blood vessels, and after binding it up with a handkerchief, Baldwin took the only rifle in the party,



and with the constable, who had a revolver, and one of the men who carried a shot-gun loaded with buck-shot, he advanced to within about fifty feet, and without warning, they fired a volley through the door. This was immediately answered by three or four shots from the inside in quick succession, all going wild, however. Again Baldwin called out: "One more chance to surrender er we'll fire agin!" Receiving no answer, the rifle, shot-gun and revolver were emptied again, this time toward the window, the report being immediately followed by a falling sound within and low groaning.

"Thare, boys!" exclaimed Baldwin as, followed by the others, he ran to the sugar-house, "I guess we've got him!" Looking in through the shattered window, he saw part of an outstretched arm on the floor, and calling the others to his help, he forced the door open. There upon the floor lay Johnson, shot through the right breast, groaning and coughing up quantities of frothy blood. Lifting him to a table, they saw that his wound was so serious they knew not how to proceed with even temporary dressing nor what to do for him, and, therefore, two of the men were sent to bring up the team with all haste.

Standing about the wounded man, there was no look of triumph in any face nor a word of exultation.

"I'm sorry fer this, Johnson," said Baldwin, "why did you shoot, why didn't you open the door?"

But Johnson's answer was a cough bringing up more of the bloody froth.

"Can't you talk?" asked the constable, bending over him, but he only stared in return as he labored to breathe.

"Don't you know you're going to die?" again asked the constable.



Johnson turned his head to one side and groaned piteously.

Baldwin and the constable withdrew to one side and, after a few words, the constable took from his pocket a memorandum book and pencil, and returning to the table, Baldwin said: "Say, Johnson, don't yer know yer goin' ter die?"

Johnson looked into Baldwin's face a moment with staring eyes and then nodded his head.

The constable noted this down in his book.

"Is ther enything yer want ter say?" asked Baldwin.

Johnson's look indicated that there was, but coughing again, he made no answer.

"Do you know enything 'bout that fork found under th' barn?" Baldwin asked, but Johnson, closing his eyes and breathing with difficulty, made no reply.

After watching him in silence for some moments, and seeing that his breathing was becoming rapidly more difficult and accompanied by loud rattles, Baldwin, placing his hand on Johnson's brow and bending over him, said: "Now Johnson, yer dyin—make a clean breast of it, did you kill Stevens?"

Johnson nodded his head.

As the men looked at each other, the constable resumed his writing.

"Did ye do it with the fork?" asked Baldwin.

Again Johnson nodded.

"An' did you put him across the fence where he was found?" continued Baldwin.

Johnson nodded.

"Did anyone else have a hand in it?" Baldwin went on after a pause to allow Johnson to recover from a cough.

Johnson shook his head.



“What you swore to at the coronor’s inquest wasn’t true, then?” asked the constable.

Johnson shook his head feebly.

“You had a quarrel with Stevens, did you?” again asked the constable.

Johnson slowly nodded his head, and after a moment uttered feebly and thickly the word, “water.” While they were looking about the place for a cup, another cough so filled his throat that he seemed unable to breathe, and after a few moments of feeble effort, he subsided in death.

When the wagon arrived, the body was placed in it, and taken through the night to Plainfield, where the excitement next day, as the story in detail became known, ran higher than at the time of the murder. Business, for the greater part of the day, was suspended, and the people flocked in a mass about the engine-house, where the body of Johnson had been taken. At the coronor’s inquest in the afternoon, Baldwin and his associates were exonerated, and measures immediately undertaken by the friends of Frank Dunn for his release. When the facts, together with Johnson’s dying admission of guilt, were learned by John Harmon, he became the most active and efficient of all Frank’s friends in bringing about his discharge from custody, and later wrote a detailed history of the case for the Farmer, subjoining a suggestion that the community manifest its confidence and congratulations by electing Frank supervisor. The good people of Plainfield, responding in a spirit of righteous desire to make amend for the ignominy he had endured and the loss he had suffered so undeservedly, started such reaction toward popular favor, that any gift in the keeping of the people, was at his acceptance.



## CHAPTER XXI.

The Convent of Our Lady of Hope was a large brick structure situated on an eminence, facing to the westward and overlooking Marine City. The central portion, or main building, was surmounted by a cupola or belfry, and extending northerly and southerly on each side were extensions of lesser elevation or wings, the whole presenting an imposing appearance viewed from the street in front or the city below. At the southern end of the wing on that side, a conservatory extended back easterly for a distance of two hundred feet or more, and at the north end an extension, in the same direction, included the kitchen, laundry and storehouse, thus inclosing on three sides a large area laid out in vine-covered walks dividing the space into a number of large flower beds. On the ground floor adjoining the kitchen at the north end, was the refectory, and at the south end on the second floor, the infirmary. Projecting easterly into the flower garden from the central portion of the main building, was the little chapel, the altar room occupying the second floor, and on the floor below it, the oratory, where the daily devotions of the nuns were held. The lawn in front extended down to the street in a series of terraces, and was shaded by several fine old trees. The driveway, beginning at an entrance gate near the lower corner of the wide lawn, came up between two rows of horse-chestnut trees, to the main entrance at the center of the building, and curved in like manner away to the second gate near the other corner below.



Kate arrived at the convent on the afternoon of one of those mild October days when a murky haze is on the hills and the falling leaves, eddying down through the listless air, covered the ground where their shadows had lain through summer days. As she entered the gateway, the clock in the cupola struck three, and she piously thought, as she walked slowly up the path, of the omen in the three strokes of the bell, marking her entrance upon the scene of her new life.

Upon reaching the main entrance she rang the bell, and in a few moments the door was unlocked and opened by a demure-faced little nun who, holding the door slightly ajar, waited with an impassive expression for Kate to state her business. "I wish to see the Mother Superior," said Kate, whereupon the nun, with a slight nod of her head, opened wider the door and, as Kate entered, she led the way across the spacious hall to a cheerless little reception-room at the right hand side. There, turning toward Kate, she said in a low, gentle voice and without raising her eyes from the floor: "Be seated; Mother Superior will be here directly."

The reception-room was disappointing to one coming from the outside with the impression of large proportions which a view of the exterior gave. It was only about twelve feet square and was lighted by only one window, and that placed so high that one could not look out of it even when standing, and it was so narrow that the light admitted, except for a while in the afternoon, was hardly sufficient to read by. The walls were plain white, and bare save for a picture of some saint, which hung at the side opposite the door. The floor was bare also, and the furniture comprised simply a plain little table placed against the wall opposite the picture, and four plain wooden chairs.



As Kate was noting these things and receiving her first impression of the austere surroundings of a recluse's life, she heard someone approaching along the hall, and a moment later the Mother Superior appeared in the doorway and, with a slight bow of her head, walked to the side of the little table where she stood resting one hand upon it as she said, in a voice notably tender and sympathetic: "What can I do for you, my child?" Rising from her seat, Kate handed her the letter she had obtained from Father Logan as she said: "I wish to become a nun and have come to this place at the suggestion of our priest, who gave me this letter addressed to you." After reading the letter, the Superior looked at Kate in silence while she refolded it and placed it in its envelope and, continuing to look at her as she drew the edge of the envelope repeatedly between the thumb and forefinger of her left hand, Kate asked: "I suppose you know Father Logan?"

"Yes, but only slightly," answered the Mother Superior. Then turning to go, she said: "Come with me to my room," and leading the way up a broad stairway at the intersection of the entrance hall and another running through the building from north to south, she led the way, upon reaching the floor above, along the hall towards the south end of the building, and opening a door on the left at the far end, motioned Kate into a room next adjoining the infirmary and looking out over the flower garden. Going over to the chair at her desk near the window, the Superior said: "Take a seat here," pointing to a chair near by, and seating herself, she placed the letter upon her desk, as she said: "Have you given careful consideration to the step you propose to take?"

"Oh yes," answered Kate, "I think so."



"How long have you had it in mind?" she inquired.

"Some five or six weeks," Kate answered.

At this the Superior arched her eyebrows and looked again several moments at Kate in silence.

"What led you to think of becoming a nun?" she asked at length, without taking her eyes from Kate's face.

"My wish to leave the sinful world and to devote all my time to God's service," answered Kate.

"What assurance do you feel that you have a vocation?" asked the Superior.

"Well," answered Kate with slight embarrassment, "I only know that I am happiest when I am reading good books, and when I give all my heart to God in prayer and praise."

Here again there was another long pause, during which Kate looked down at her dusty travelling dress and the hand bag at her side with a dawning sense of having, perhaps, assumed too much as she felt the gentle but searching eyes of the Superior upon her.

"Well, my child," at length spoke the Superior, "you are tired after your journey; I will send you to a room for rest. Prepare yourself for confession and communion to-morrow morning and ask Father Vincent to advise you and to direct you as to your vocation." Here she struck a call-bell upon her desk, and a moment later a light knock answered. Upon opening the door, the Superior said to the nun standing there in response to her call: "Sister Alberta, take this young woman to room D beyond the chapel and look after her till I call her again to-morrow." At this Kate arose, and bowing to the Superior, followed the nun to the room designated where, for the first time since leaving home, she



found opportunity to remove the stains of travel and to secure much needed rest.

Sitting at the open window of her room about an hour later, looking out upon the flower garden, she saw a large number of girls, probably two hundred or more, going out, two by two, from a doorway somewhere at the south side of the chapel and, led by two nuns, march along one of the walks running across the flower garden to an open space or field beyond, where they broke rank and gave themselves over to the unrestrained hilarity of children on the play-ground. This was the first intimation she had obtained of the character of the work done by the nuns at this place, and, in the condition of her spirits that afternoon, it was a great relief to her to hope that she might, to some extent, be brought into association with those children in her assignment to work. She had never taught school, it was true, but she was confident she could do so, and she knew she would choose to do that if she was to have anything to say in the matter. She could instruct those children in music, vocal and instrumental, she could teach them to do needlework, to knit and darn, to cut and fit their dresses, to cook and make pickles and preserves. Thus thinking, as she watched them from the window, she felt her confidence returning and her spirits rising again. With gladdened heart, she lifted her eyes to heaven as her lips murmured a spontaneous expression of thankfulness to God who had led her here, she felt sure, for the work she could do in His service and to the glory of His name.

An hour later, as she saw the children returning in file again, knowing that it was near the supper hour, she arose in a more hopeful mood and made ready. Presently, a light rap told her that sister Alberta was there to



show her to the refectory, and opening the door, with something of old-time light on her face that held the nun's discerning eye for a moment, she accompanied her along the hall through the north wing and down a stairway at its far end leading directly into the refectory. This stairway, evidently, was for the nuns exclusively for, as she reached the refectory, the children were entering through a wide doorway from the main hall on that floor. The refectory extended in its length the entire width of the building, and was so wide that tables, seating twelve on each side, stood one beyond the other the whole length of the room, leaving a wide space along either side. A nun sat at each end of the tables when the children were at meals, and others stood at intervals along the room to bring in food and to assist the younger children. About midway in the room and at one side, opposite the main entrance, was a large table upon a raised platform where the Superior and certain other of the nuns, officers and teachers, had their places. The room was well lighted by a row of windows along the north side and three at the west end, and the walls, plain white, were unadorned by a single picture or any ornamentation whatever.

Sister Alberta led Kate to a seat at the table upon the platform, known as the "Superior's table," and took a seat there beside her. After grace was said by the Superior, Kate noticed as the meal progressed, that not a single word was spoken either by the nuns or the children, and surprised by so remarkable silence in such an assemblage, she said to sister Alberta: "The children are very quiet."

"No one is expected to speak unless the Superior permits it, as she often does, and as you will see later, by a stroke of the bell." When the meal was about half



through, the bell sounded, and instantly the great room was filled with the buzz of human voices. The children chatted in subdued tones, and their faces brightened in their enjoyment of the release from restraint till the meal was finished, when the Superior struck the bell again, and as instantly as before the babel was hushed, whereupon the Superior gave thanks and the children began to file out, two by two, one table following the other in order.

The next morning Kate attended mass and received communion in the little chapel, and afterwards remained there in prayer till the bell rang for breakfast. At her confession, Father Vincent had advised meditation and prayer for the directing light of the Holy Ghost—a novenna, or nine days' period of continuous prayer, fasting and meditation before the altar of Our Lady of Hope, to be followed by confession and communion, when he would again counsel her in the light that would come from the pious and humble performance of this special devotion. Father Vincent was the resident priest at the convent. He was about twenty-five years of age, small, thin and feminine in voice and manner. His eyes were pale blue, his hair brown, and his complexion as fair as a girl's, but his hollowed cheeks, thin nose, and a hacking cough that interrupted his conversation, explained such frailty and augured not for a long life. Kate was greatly pleased by the kindly interest the priest manifested, and by the unostentatious piety evidenced in all he said and did. As she observed him at mass that morning, the pathetic fervor of his voice, the reverent devotion of his manner, the profound piety pervading every word and act so transcended that function as she had become accustomed to see it performed in the town



hall at Plainfield, that she found herself thinking that, heretofore, she had never heard the mass properly said, and never before knew how impressive, how beautiful, and how full of significance it really was.



## CHAPTER XXII.

Kate accomplished the novenna to her advantage in more ways than one. In addition to the spiritual benefits received, her piety and diligent performance of the nine days' retreat had been observed by the watchful eye of the Superior, and went far to modify the notion she had entertained on the day of Kate's arrival. The manner in which she conducted herself had also impressed favorably the nuns whose duties brought them in contact with her, and furthermore, she had won the good opinion of Father Vincent, whose opportunity for observing her was such, of course, as to give to his conclusions the quality of certainty.

The question of vocation having been happily settled, Kate was formally admitted to the novitiate, and, clothed in the garb of that position, she was assigned to the sewing-room, where her skill and proficiency secured for her, within six months, promotion to the management of that department. The sisters associated with her in the sewing-room, not only liked her, they became her admirers, and as she was advanced from one position to another, no envy nor jealousy ever showed itself, a general recognition of her superiority inducing acquiescent satisfaction. As the Superior's confidence in her grew, she found intercourse with that personage more unrestrained and confidential, and a sort of mutual soul interpretation gradually developing reciprocal appreciation. To these favorable circumstances there was one exception. Sister Alberta entertained the no-



tion that Kate was over confident in self-esteem, and that she required such discipline as would bring her to a proper sense of humility. She fancied that Kate's conduct was even arrogant at times in its presumptuousness, and that if the Superior could not see it, it was simply because she was fascinated by a pretty face and worldly tricks of manner. Possessed of these fancies, she often saw, with ill-suppressed feelings, the Superior pass over certain things without apparently taking the least notice of them, which, if allowed to thus go on uncorrected, would some day wreck the novice's career and bring humiliating regret to the Superior. All this was the cause of much pain to the heart of Alberta, who was not actuated by any evil disposition, for she was conscientious and well-intentioned, but unfortunately for her, she was prone to draw conclusions too precipitately from premises not always true, and on more than one occasion heretofore had made trouble for herself and for others about her through the exercise of misdirected zeal.

One day, when engaged upon a lot of new dresses for the girls, Kate sent one of her helpers to sister Alberta, who was officially in charge of the storeroom, with a requisition for some narrow insertion which she designed to go into the yokes of the dress waists. The messenger returned with the statement from Alberta that she could not let her have it at that time. The next day, Kate sent again for the insertion, and, receiving a similar reply she concluded there was some unavoidable delay or difficulty, and therefore waited a couple of days before renewing the request and then went herself to the storeroom.

"Has Mother Superior sanctioned this frivolity," inquired Alberta a little sharply.



"Why, no," answered Kate, surprised and stung by the nun's words and manner. "I did not think it was necessary to speak to her about it."

"It is your duty to speak to her about it," tartly replied Alberta, "and when you do, it is time enough to send requisition for it here."

Very deeply hurt in her feelings, Kate returned to the sewing-room, carefully concealing any indication of what she felt, and resumed her work wondering whether she had better go to the Superior with the matter or have the dresses finished without the insertion.

That evening, after supper, the Superior sent for Kate. Surmising at once that this summons had reference to the incident of the day, Kate went to the Superior's room not over confident, for she had already admitted to herself after thinking of it, that the sting she had felt in Alberta's words came from the right in them.

Upon entering the Superior's room, her heart grew quieter as she observed no indications of displeasure upon the Superior's face.

"What is this I hear," she asked as she motioned Kate to the chair at her desk, "about insertion for the children's dresses?"

"Why, Mother," answered Kate, looking with candor into the Superior's eyes, "I never once thought that I was exceeding my authority; I only wished to make the new dresses look prettier when it could be done at a trifling outlay, and truly, I thought you would be pleased."

Without further question the Superior looked at her for some moments in silence, and Kate misinterpreting this, supported her elbow with one hand as she covered her eyes, in which tears were rising, with the other.

"Now my child," began the Superior in gentle tones,



“there is no occasion for tears, and you must try to always control you feelings. You may not know it yet, but we have to be very careful here and economize to even a penny’s worth. I am sure your intention was good, and your desire even laudable, yet, even though you are in charge of your department, you should not, in strict conformance to rules, add to established expenditures in any degree whatever without permission. I do not say this in reprimand, but for your information.”

Here she struck the call-bell, and to the nun answering at the door she said: “Tell sister Alberta to come here.”

Under the soothing tones of the Superior’s words and the gentle kindness of her manner, Kate had regained her composure before Alberta answered the summons.

“Sister Alberta,” said the Superior, “have you any narrow insertion in the storeroom?”

“Yes, Mother,” answered Alberta.

“Well,” continued the Superior, “we shall require some for the children’s summer dresses which are being made now, for I think we may incur the additional expense out of consideration for the great improvement it will make in their appearance.”

“I don’t think I have enough in one width to go on all of them,” said Alberta, shaking her head.

“Have you enough in different widths?” asked the Superior.

“Yes, Mother,” answered Alberta.

“Well, we can use the narrower as far as it will go on the smaller dresses, and take as much of the wider as may be needed then to finish out the larger ones.”

“Very well, Mother,” said Alberta.

“That’s all,” said the Superior, bowing towards both, whereupon Alberta and Kate withdrew, each to her own place.



Sister Alberta had been in the convent many years, and had earned for herself a reputation for strict conformity to rule and discipline and for the diligence with which she discharged her duties without regard or favor to anyone. She was about fifty years of age, medium in stature, spare, thin-faced, "hook-nosed," with small gray eyes set rather close together, a small mouth and a narrow, pointed chin. She was pious and conscientious, and loyal in her friendship when the recipient had demonstrated to her satisfaction true worth. Until that was accomplished, however, her suspicion was alert and, as in the instance related, very likely to lead her into trouble. Her reverence and devotion to the Superior were all that her nature could make them, and, for that reason, what she observed when summoned to the Superior's room on the occasion referred to, wrought a great change in her estimate and deportment toward Kate thereafter. It was plain to her now that Kate was in favor with the Superior, there could be no guess-work about that, for how otherwise explain the unheard-of innovation of putting insertion in the orphans' dresses! Well, the Superior knew more about this novice than she did, at least she ought to, and if she saw enough in her to merit such unprecedented consideration, why, that was pretty good reason that she deserved it, and hereafter she was not going to look after her and worry about her any more. If she was worthy the Superior's confidence, she would try to consider her worthy of hers, a resolution which removed from Kate's experience thereafter its single disagreeable element.

One morning, about two weeks later, Kate was returning from the conservatory with some flowers she had obtained from old Pierre, the gardener, to place in



the vases upon the altar of Our Lady of Hope, when she encountered a messenger with a summons to the Superior's room. Wondering what the occasion of her call might be, she presented herself straightway at the room with the flowers in her hand.

"I have sent for you," began the Superior, as she laid her pen in the rack and, placing a blotter between the leaves of a ledger, closed it upon her desk, "to talk to you about taking sister Cecelia's place, at least temporarily or until she recovers." Sister Cecelia was secretary and bookkeeper, and for years had occupied the room adjoining that of the Superior in her official capacity. About ten days previously she had been sent to the infirmary, incapacitated by a chronic gouty affection of the joints, which so stiffened her hands and fingers that she was no longer able to use her pen. "I have observed that you write a good hand, and with your qualifications, I think you competent to attend to the books and to do the correspondence, with my assistance. Since sister Cecelia went into the infirmary, I have been trying to do the work, but the doctor tells me that she is not likely to be able to resume her work for some time, if at all, and after thinking of the matter, I have concluded to call you to take her place."

Kate's delight at this very complimentary promotion was beaming from her face as she said: "Thank you, Mother, I hope I shall be able to do the work to your satisfaction."

"I shall send sister Ann to take your place," went on the Superior, "and as soon as she relieves you, come here and I will install you in your new position."

As the Superior ceased speaking she made her little nod, which always signified that the interview was at an end, and Kate arising, took a beautiful white rose from



the bunch of flowers in her hand, and offered it to the Superior as she said with a smile of pleasure: "I was going to the altar of Our Lady of Hope with these flowers—may I offer this one to you?"

"Thank you," said the Superior, as she received it and held it to her nose as Kate, with a bow, hurried away to the chapel.

The room in which Kate took up her new work adjoined the Superior's on the north side. It had two windows at the eastern end overlooking the flower garden, and two doors, one opening into the hall and another connecting with the Superior's room. Like every other room in the house, its floor was bare and its walls plain white. In the right-hand corner, next the window and against the south wall, was a large flat-topped desk, and adjoining this, a long high desk with a sloping top, likewise against the south wall, and upon which heavy leather-bound account-books lay. At the flat desk was a plain wooden chair, and in front of the high desk, a low broad stool upon which sister Cecelia used to stand when at work there, to compensate for her small stature. At the opposite side of the room was a letter press, an iron safe, a stand upon which lay a few books, including an unabridged dictionary, and a wide old-fashioned bookcase, in which were a few volumes on an upper shelf, and stored away on all the others were old ledgers and books of account, and bundles of documents yellow with age.

Through her love of order, her industry and the knowledge of accounts and correspondence acquired at Plainfield Seminary, Kate pleased the Superior by the celerity with which she comprehended her instructions in the new work and made rapid progress in acquiring facility in the accomplishment of the varied duties of her office.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

In her new position Kate found more frequent opportunity to devote, at intervals during the day, a few minutes in prayer and adoration before the altar in the chapel than came to her at any time since entering the convent. These little devotions had not gone unnoticed by the Superior, who had observed them while Kate was even yet in her first assignment in the sewing-room, and had seen in them a most assuring indication of the piety of the young novice.

One day as Kate was kneeling as usual in prayer before the altar, she raised her eyes reverently toward the tabernacle and, as she did so, was startled by a momentary display of pure white light directly in front of the tabernacle door, dazzling in its brightness, circular in form and about the size of a small tea-saucer, with radiating rays innumerable all about its circumference. In a moment, it was gone, and, believing that what she had seen was in some way miraculous, she bowed low in thanksgiving for the favor heaven had shown her, while her heart throbbed with sudden excitement. After leaving the chapel, she hastened to the Superior to whom she related what she had just seen before the tabernacle. "My child," said the Superior, looking at her in a way Kate had never seen anyone look at her before, and speaking slowly, with measured words, "I believe you have been vouchsafed a beatific vision of the Holy Eucharist—favored child! go straight away and



thank God for the special favor He has seen fit to show you—go, and I will join you in thanks to our blessed Lord.” Before the altar, the Superior bowed reverently and prayed half audibly with extraordinary fervency, while Kate at her side, prayed too, as well as she could in the state of mind her “vision” and the Superior’s words had brought upon her.

As they withdrew, the Superior advised Kate to devote some part of every hour to adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and to tell Father Vincent when at confession, of what she had seen. But, before she had the opportunity to do this latter, in the afternoon of that day, she again saw the same round white light for an instant toward the ceiling while at prayer in the chapel. At her confession later, she was somewhat disappointed by the apparent nonchalance of the priest as she described to him in detail what she had seen. “Be patient and prayerful, and watch and wait, and we shall see what comes of it,” was all he said in reply or advice to her.

The appearance of these lights was not long confined to the chapel; she began to see them everywhere, in her room, along the halls, by day and at night, without warning, and often when her mind was upon her work or other matters, the light would flash before her for a moment and as quickly disappear, but, whenever and wherever seen, she immediately uttered a prayer and betook her soul into an attitude of reverence for a few moments. As she told the Superior of these things from day to day, that good woman would raise her eyes and hands in spontaneous worship, and thank heaven for the favor conceded to a humble member of her household. Her demeanor toward Kate grew more and more condescending as the days went by, made memorable by the repetition of these occurrences, and at times, her



bearing became so deferential as to cause a most uncomfortable feeling in one never unmindful of the relative disparity of their stations as Kate had always been. The Superior now began also to allow her special privileges, and often accompanied her in prayer in the chapel and in her walks in the flower garden, to the great astonishment of the nuns who marvelled greatly, until an account of the "visions" was given them by the Superior who at length, when the necessity for it occurred to her, called them together in the oratory for that purpose. After listening to the Superior their wonder at her conduct ceased, or rather it was altered and diverted to the novice chosen by heaven to be thus favored in this most extraordinary manner.

Very soon, however, another strange thing began to attract Kate's attention. In the quiet of her room, while engaged in her clerical duties, she heard certain unaccountable tappings about her desk, now continuous and persistent, and again not occurring for several days. For a few weeks before leaving the sewing-room she had noticed similar tappings there, sometimes upon a sewing-machine, again upon a table or chair, but her attention was so occupied in the supervision of her helpers, and so much of detail there that she gave them only a moment's notice and forgot them until forced upon her again some time later. In the stillness of the large room, however, the tappings were so much more distinct and continuous, and she found her attention diverted thereby to such degree from her work that one afternoon she undertook a special examination of her desk inside and out, drawers, locks, and in every space and corner, to discover some lurking beetle, "snapping-bug," or perhaps even a mouse to account for these noises. One by one she took out the drawers with a



knock upon the bottom side of each as she did so, and then carefully examined every item as she replaced it, even to the contents of envelopes, pencil and pen boxes. While thus engaged she was somewhat startled to hear the tapping upon the drawers immediately after emptying them, and while they were even yet in her hands! She could not understand it, and as she sat there listening and wondering, after having given up the search and readjusted the desk, she observed that the tapping began to assume somewhat of order. First, there was a series of single knocks, then a series of double knocks, then of treble and so on increasing. Then a single rap would be followed by two, then by three, and so on in regular arithmetical order up to twenty or thirty. Had the Superior been in the next room she would have sought her aid in searching for some explanation of these strange tappings, but it so happened that on that day she was absent on some official business at the bishop's, and would not be at the convent again till evening. Therefore alone, in the stillness of the rooms, Kate sat listening and wondering, and when the knocks began to come in ones and twos and threes, and in groups of numbers forward and backward, she said to herself, this can not be a bug nor a mouse, for there seems to be intelligence in it. Under certain circumstances this thought would have been sufficient to send her flying to the chapel for protection, but in the full bright sunlight of a beautiful June day, with the singing of birds coming in through the open window, the courage begotten of light and companionship kept the slightest intimation of fear thus far in abeyance. As she counted the knocks and noted their number, she felt an irresistible curiosity to know more of the cause and significance of them. Why doesn't it knock three now, she queried mentally,



instead of one, two, three, and so on. Immediately three knocks were given and then a pause, as if awaiting her further suggestion. This did really somewhat startle her. After a little pause, she asked in her mind: make three knocks again. Promptly three knocks were given. "Why, what can this be!" she exclaimed aloud in some alarm, as she went to the door leading to the Superior's room and looking in, continued: "How I wish Mother Superior was here." Going back to her window, she stood with one hand on the casing as she looked at the desk and thought, is this something good or evil. At once there was a rapid succession of knocks. How can I know what that means, she thought. "If it is good," she spoke aloud, after a moment, "make two raps." Promptly two raps were made. Filled with astonishment, she continued, after a moment to recover herself, "Who or what is it?" Silence following, and perceiving that her question could be answered by knocks denoting only yes or no, she added: "If it is from God, make two knocks." Several raps were made in succession, then two distinct, followed by several more made in succession. "Is it from some saint?" she asked. Several knocks followed. Dear me! she thought, what can this mean? "Is it truly from some person?" she asked aloud, and two very sharp raps followed. For a few moments she was almost awestruck, but, recovering herself, she again asked: "Is it from any one in trouble?" Two raps were given, and the pathos of it stirring her sympathy, she asked again: "Is it from some poor suffering soul in purgatory?" A single sharp rap confused her when she expected to hear two; however, she persisted: "Do you wish me to pray for you, or to have masses said for you?" in a voice tender with sympathy. This was followed by so



many raps and in such disorder, that she could draw no conclusion as to the answer and, with a sudden feeling of distrust, she turned away quickly and hastened to the chapel, where she spent a long time in prayer and in pondering over the significance of the rapping upon the desk.

From the chapel she went out to the garden, and finding old Pierre there digging about the flower-beds, she talked with him of planting, transplanting, of "slipping" and grafting with so much practical knowledge of these things that the old man frequently stopped to straighten his back as far as it could be straightened as he said: "Mon dieu! vous know so mooch ez I do 'bout eet." But Kate was not talking to air her knowledge, rather was she trying to relieve her mind of the effect of the strange experience of that afternoon which now, as the shadows crept into the corners indoors, began to develop in her a fear of being alone. So she talked to the old gardener till the children were returning from the playground, when she joined them on the way to supper.

Upon entering the refectory, Kate was pleased to see that the Mother Superior had already returned and was standing at her table awaiting the children. She appeared to be tired and took very little supper, devoting most of the time at table to looking over letters she had found upon her desk awaiting her. As soon after supper as she could do so, Kate related her experience of the day to the Superior. "My child!" exclaimed that good woman with an expression of awe on her face, "that is spirit-rapping, it is of Satan—an awful thing! I am shocked and pained by this. How could the power of evil manifest itself here and about you! I believe that the devil, envious of the favor heaven



has shown you, is trying to distract you in order to bring about your undoing. Fly from it, my child! fly from it as you prize your immortal soul, and seek the protection of our blessed Lady of Hope, who will answer your prayers and your trust in her by interceding with her Son in your behalf! Put your trust in God, and He who has already shown you such favor, will not leave you to the enemy who by every means in his power will try to confound and distract you from the peaceful enjoyment of heavenly favor. Go to confession at once and tell all to Father Vincent, concealing and omitting nothing, and be guided by his ghostly advice.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Two days later, Kate received a telegram announcing the sudden and unexpected death of her father. This sad news came upon her without the slightest intimation, for, in a letter received only a few days before, they were all reported well and special mention made of the activity of her father who, with Andy, was busy at sheep-shearing, hurrying it out of the way before "haying" began. Almost overcome with grief, Kate made instant preparation for her departure in a sort of half distracted way, which not even the kind assistance, the pious exhortation and sensible admonition of the Superior could wholly compose. When, however, she was made ready for the journey the Superior, accompanying her to the door where Pierre was waiting with the old chaise to take her to the station, said to her: "Now, my child, bear with brave patience this trial, for you know it is the will of God. Think of the sorrows of Our Blessed Lady, and consider her complete submission to God's all-wise purposes. Pray for resignation and strength, and be assured that we shall not forget you in our prayers, nor fail to keep you in our thoughts till you are restored to us again."

In the absence of particular information as to how or why death came so suddenly upon her father, Kate's journey homewards was one increasing misery. Was it by accident and a cruel death, or was it by some sudden collapse? She recalled the "faint spells" of recent



years, more frequently, as she thought of it now, in the past two, and hoped that if his time had come he had been taken away in one of these rather than by a painful death. It was an awful blow anyway! What would her mother do now? In all probability she would go to live with John or James in the West, and the dear old homestead would be deserted. Alas! how insecure are the possessions of this world! To our youthful, worldly eyes they appear so desirable, so secure and enduring, and we strive for them as if once won, they would be ours forever instead of for a few uncertain years. The struggle for worldly possessions, even when successful, developed chiefly our desire to appropriate to self, for lo! to-morrow we die, and all is left behind except that which we have cultivated or developed in ourselves during the struggle for possession. The object of our contention is lost, the resultant effect upon ourselves remains. That alone, we take with us.

Upon reaching home, Kate found her mother prostrated. This great affliction having fallen upon her so suddenly in the absence of her children, neither of the sons having yet arrived, she found no sustaining comfort in the attention, however kind, of those administering to her comparable with what her heart craved, and could only come to her from her own. The grief, too, of Andy and Betty was as deep as if they also had suffered the loss of a parent, so long had they been in Mr. Barry's employ and so great was their affection for the kind old man who had been to them as a father. The house was filled with neighbors and friends who were coming and going in numbers, expressing sympathy and their affection and esteem for the "old pioneer."

Kate learned that her father had arisen on the day of his death in his usual health, and upon going down to



the dining-room, where Betty was already arranging the table for breakfast, he spoke to her pleasantly of how he had overslept. While putting on his blouse, she saw him reel, and he would have fallen had she not caught him and with difficulty supported him to the lounge. After a screaming call to Mrs. Barry, she ran to the kitchen and getting a dipper of water, sprinkled his face and slapped his palms, while Mrs. Barry, supporting his head, loosened his collar and fanned and called to him. But there was no response, and when the doctor arrived later, he said that death was due to heart-failure, and that "to all intents and purposes" it had been instantaneous. "Arrah, th' dear, good man," moaned Mrs. Barry to those about her, "I believe he died av a broken heart, fer he never was th' same since Kate wint away to th' convint."

When the sons arrived, the question awaiting their decision was, as to where interment should be. There was no Catholic burial-ground nearer than High Falls, but it was known that, some weeks previous, Mr. Barry and Frank Dunn had interested themselves in looking about for some land near the village suitable for a burial-ground, and that they had decided upon a certain piece not far from the church, but had not closed the matter on account of the price, which was considered too high. Frank Dunn and Mr. Barry's son John went, therefore, to the owner to see what could be done. "It's all right, gentlemen," said he to them, "you can have it under the circumstances, at your offer. The land is sold as completely as any deed can make it—you have my word for it. Go and bury the body of my good friend Mr. Barry there, and when you get to it, come to me and we will pass the papers."

In some way this transaction reached Father Logan,



for on the morning of the day on which the funeral was to take place, he sent a messenger to say that he wished to see one of the sons of Mr. Barry. John, being the elder, presented himself at the priest's house.

"I undhersthan' yer goin' to bury yer father in th' new buryin'-groun'," said he.

"Yes," answered John, "Mr. Bruce told us yesterday to do so. He always thought a great deal of father, and out of consideration for that and for us, he said we could consider the lot sold at the offer made, but which is considerably below what he asked for it, I'm told."

"Well, we have to pay for it, an' I sint fer you now to sign fer twinty-five dollars, yer father's share av it, before ye bury 'im theyre."

"Why, you haven't got title yet!" objected John in great surprise.

"Haven't we Misther Bruce's word fer it?" returned the priest.

"Oh yes, but hadn't this better wait a while—I am not qualified to administer my father's estate," interposed John.

"Aren't you his son?" said the priest, argumentatively.

"I don't see how that alters it," said John.

"Well, it althers it," returned the priest with some warmth, "so that av ye want yer father buried theyre, ye'll have to sign before it's done."

Seeing how determined the priest was, and wishing to avoid any interference or unseemly contention, John concluded to waive the technical point, and therefore signed the paper the priest had ready for him.

The burial over, it was discovered that Mr. Barry's will set forth that the property should not be distributed among his children during the lifetime of the mother,



to the end that she might enjoy the income therefrom. His son John and Frank Dunn were mentioned as executors, and it was left optional whether the farm should be sold or kept in the family at rental. In a conference of the family it was decided to dispose of the farm and appurtenances by sale immediately, if possible, or later through Frank's agency, and that Mrs. Barry should go West with her sons and live with either one, or with each for a season, as best suited her liking after she had arrived there.

Several days were occupied in disposing of the stock and farming tools and in selecting and packing certain old articles of the household belongings to be removed by the sons to their homes. Kate suffered an occasional pang as, now and then, certain articles, old and worn and homely, but particularly identified with some dear association of the past, were added to the list for the auctioneer; but when they came to her room, she reserved of all its contents, only a little French clock which her father gave her on her twelfth birthday.

When, after much unavoidable confusion, these matters were sufficiently disposed of, tearful good-bys were said and Kate set out again for the convent. On the occasion of her previous journey thither, her inspiration, while in the main true, was more or less tinged with sentimentalism, but now, with her back turned upon her dismantled home, her dear father dead, and face to face with the actualities of the life she had chosen, her soul was so depressed that only by the greatest effort of will could she defend herself against the persistent temptation to regret. As the miles multiplied between her and the scenes of her girlhood, however, and she found herself nearing her destination, her composure and resolution increased, so that when she left the train



at the station in Marine City, she felt a comforting sense of deliverance and a pleased contentment as she hurried up to the convent.

Once more at her work, the familiar faces of the nuns, the motherly affection of the Superior, the rows of children in the refectory, the chapel, the angelus bell, the flower garden, the quiet, secluded and protecting atmosphere of the place quickly eliminated the material incidents of her visit home, and restored to her the spirit of her work with a livelier sense of appreciation for the reminding glimpse she had taken of the world, its trials, uncertainties, its sorrows and losses. In resuming her former devotions she would find henceforth a comforting duty in special prayers and offices for the repose of her dear father's soul, and would find also consolation in the thought that her station in life would be such that, in the nature of things, she could not only cherish his memory undisturbed, but she could also follow him in filial affection with her prayers and self-sacrifice to obtain for him eternal rest.



## CHAPTER XXV.

For many weeks the course of life at the convent ran on in its smooth and narrow channel with no incident greater than that now and then some one of the larger girls was made to stand for two hours with her back against the wall in the main corridor for being "impudent," or that old Pierre, by being late some morning at the vestry, kept Father Vincent waiting with his vestments on, fully two whole minutes for his coming to serve the mass.

The mysterious tapping on Kate's desk had recurred but once, and then on the second day following her return to the convent. The Superior being at the time in her room adjoining, Kate ran to her with the intelligence, and that good woman, seizing a bottle of holy water, cautiously entered the room and, with pious invocations of "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," plentifully sprinkled the desk and Kate and herself with a final general distribution about the walls to the great discomfiture evidently of the Evil One, for thereafter it was heard no more. The beautiful white lights continued, however, to appear with increasing frequency. She saw them now several times during mass every morning, and somewhere about the altar every time she knelt in the chapel at prayer, most frequently in front of the tabernacle, and at times directly in the face of the statue of the virgin upon the altar of Our Lady of Hope.

A painful mishap about this time befel the Mother Superior. In returning from the basement, whither



she had accompanied Pierre to discover the source of leaking water which was flooding the floor, she slipped or in some way tripped upon the stone steps and fell, striking her knee with such force that she was immediately rendered unable to walk, and, suffering great pain, was carried to the infirmary and a messenger hurried away for the doctor. Upon his arrival, and after careful examination of the injured knee, the doctor stated that a portion of the patella had been fractured and the parts so bruised that she would be confined to her bed for a long time. "My child," she said to Kate, "I am so thankful that this infliction comes to me when you are qualified to look after the duties of the office. Our Heavenly Father, you see, tempers his judgments with providential mercy."

One day in the week following this injury to the Superior, Kate had made out, at her request, a long monthly statement of expenditures in the culinary department, and had spread before her upon the desk another large sheet upon which to write out a copy of the same. With her pencil still in hand and her arm upon the desk, her attention was attracted by the shouts of the children on the playground, and, looking through the open window over beyond the flower garden, she saw a number of them, with hands joined, forming a ring around one of the sisters whom, for the moment, they had entrapped with great jubilation into their play. Watching them thus, she was suddenly surprised to observe that her hand, propelled by some unseen force, began to move upon the paper, at first back and forth several times, and then crosswise a number of times, and then in a sweeping circle as large as the sheet of paper would admit, moving faster and faster, and with increasing force, till a great black ring was made by the repeated



passage of the pencil point. Feeling no apprehension, because she surmised that this was probably some curious nervous manifestation induced by her recent trials, she regarded it with a sort of passive interest and, lifting her arm from the desk, she looked at the worn point of the pencil and examined her hand and arm, feeling of them and rubbing them with her disengaged hand. In a tentative way she then placed her hand again upon the paper, whereupon it immediately sped away again over the same track, round and round, even faster than she could have made it move of her own volition. Without stopping its motion, her hand was suddenly changed in its course so that her pencil described a great figure of eight, and this was continued with the same rapid movement, till the tracings showed the figure an inch wide in the marking.

Assuming that this indicated that she was too nervous to continue her work, she dropped her pencil and went down to the garden for a half-hour's recreation among the flowers, and when the doctor called, to-morrow, she would consult him about herself and this curious nervous disturbance. At the end of a path, over on the north side, she found old Pierre gathering flower seeds and putting them into pasteboard boxes. As she watched him, her thoughts went back to a year ago, to the old home and the flower seeds, and her mother and father, and too saddened to find interest in what the old man was garrulously telling her of what he had observed as the reason why certain seeds were only brown while others of the same kind were black when ripe, she turned away, and drawing out her beads, walked up and down the paths till she had said seven paters and seven aves for the repose of her father's soul.

Upon returning to her desk somewhat refreshed and



composed, she took up her pencil as she seated herself, and placed her hand upon the paper to observe whether the nervous movement was now gone. With more of disappointment than surprise, she saw that it was still there, for at once her hand began making the circles again, but this time only during a few moments, for, with a sudden sweep to the left side of the page, it began to move as if in writing, or what else she could not tell, but she would let it go on for a little and see. When, after a few moments, it stopped with an abrupt dash to the margin, she drew the paper round squarely in front of her and looked at it. Imagine, if you can, her astonishment to see written there plainly, but not in her own handwriting: "My child, this is for you alone. Do not show it to the Superior, nor speak of it to her yet. Your brother Francis is here with a message from your father. Let us have a clean sheet and I will write it through your hand for him." This plain writing by her own hand, yet through the influence of someone else! Her brother here, her long lost brother! and with a message from her father! She was almost helpless with amazement and a feeling of awe akin to fear, which only the words, "a message from your father" restrained from sending her flying in fright from the room. Trembling with excitement, but controlling herself with all the will power at her command, she procured a clean sheet of paper, and placing her hand holding the pencil upon it, the writing went on again. When it had ceased, she eagerly picked up the paper and read: "Do not fear, my dear sister, I am your own brother, and those with me here are our friends and helpers. We are with you every day more or less, but until now, of course, you did not know it. Your guide, or guardian angel, as you would say, has long worked



over you to develop your latent capacity for this writing, and we are all rejoicing that this means of communication has been at last accomplished. Father is not strong enough to be here yet, but he will come soon. He sends this message to you: 'My darling daughter, you are as dear to me as ever. I will soon come to see you. Things here are not much like what I expected. You will know more about it soon for you have a great guide, and they tell me he has great things in store for you! Now my child,' " the writing went on, evidently from the moving influence itself, "we will not write any more this time, for your magnetism is nearly exhausted, and you are excited. You should rest now, and calm yourself, and later, when your strength is returned and the time favorable, we will write again. Good-bye for this time, and may God bless the work so auspiciously begun." In unspeakable wonderment, she read the writing over and over again, marvelling at this unheard-of occurrence, and then folding the paper carefully, she locked it away in a drawer of the desk, and, to recover her composure, went over to the infirmary to visit the Superior.

"Are you ill, my child?" she asked, as Kate seated herself at the side of the narrow iron cot, "it seems to me you look flushed and feverish."

"No mother," answered Kate, putting her hand to her cheek to try its temperature, "I have been at work for some time, and I have brought this draft of the statement in for you to look it over before I copy it."

This assertion, while true in a way was not, of course, the whole truth, and as she made it a sense of guilt sent a blush to her face, which was so masked by the flush already there that it was not observed.

"Yes, my child," said the Superior, after a close ex-



amination of the statement, "it seems to be correct, but now," handing it back to her, "lay your work aside and go out for a little exercise in the air—I fear you are threatened by some illness."

After making but a few turns in the garden, however, she went up to the chapel, where she gave herself up to meditation, not however upon the ordinary subjects of that office, but upon the strange occurrence of the day which was excluding every other topic from her mind. What if the influence which moved her arm in the writing was evil, as was that of the rapping which the holy water drove away! That was the question that worried her because of its importance and by the persistence with which it attached itself to every other thought relating to the affair. How could she know? for the written words expressed good and pious sentiment, and were just such as the Superior herself would use under the same circumstances. Nevertheless, it would be prudent to take proper precaution to be assured, and next time, before submitting her hand to the writing, she would sprinkle herself and the desk with holy water, and keep a bottle filled with it right on the desk in front of her. She knew that was what the Superior would do if she knew anything about the matter, as indeed, Kate intended she should a little later, but for a while she would keep it to herself, as requested, but at the first indication of any evil, she would inform the Superior at once and seek her help. The quiet and sacred atmosphere of the chapel, so adapted to still the tumult stirred by the day's experience, she lingered a while longer to tell her rosary, and to obtain the helpful intercession of Our Lady of Hope. Thus occupied, she continued there while sisters came and went in their



ordinary brief devotional visits. At length the refectory bell sounded, and startled at how time had been slipping by unperceived, she hurried her aves to close the decade and, hastening from the chapel, she joined the sisters in the corridor on their way to the refectory.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

As soon as breakfast was over next morning, Kate hastened up to the infirmary to make her usual morning call on the Superior and to receive her directions for the day.

"I am pleased to see you looking so well this morning," said the Superior, "but I think you had better rest to-day, and I shall not, therefore, lay out any work for you unless there should be something very pressing in the morning mail."

This was quite to Kate's purpose, for, thinking so much, as she had, of the mysterious writing of the day before, she was desirous of an opportunity to satisfy herself as to how she should rightfully regard it. "Thank you, mother," she replied, "I shall be in the office for a while, where I can copy the letters if you send any in."

Upon entering her room, Kate took from her pocket a bottle of holy water, with which she had provided herself at the chapel, and sprinkled the desk, her chair and herself, and then placed the bottle uncorked upon the desk in front of her. Laying a sheet of foolscap paper upon the desk, she picked up her pencil and placed her hand upon the paper. Immediately it began to move in circles for a little, and then to make the double loop figure, after which it wrote: "Now a clean paper, please." Having supplied this, the writing went on as follows: "My child, I am glad we are to have so good opportunity for the writing to-day. In order to econo-



mize both time and magnetism, I will answer questions now as you ask them, and so impart knowledge in the most brief and pointed manner."

"Well, who are you?" asked Kate, somewhat timidly.

"I am your guide, placed over you for your instructing and directing."

"Does every one have a guide?"

"Yes."

"When did you become my guide?"

"At your birth."

"Are guides sent to every one at birth?"

No, generally at the awakening of consciousness. The mental condition of the parents determine that. I have seen guides appointed at birth. Such children always make remarkable persons in some particular, for, however gifted and talented the parents may be, the guide is not appointed immediately upon birth unless, as I say, the child is intended for some great work. On the other hand, the guide may not be appointed till the child is one or two or more years old, as when a child is born out of wedlock, of degenerate or of mismated parents."

"What do you mean by mismated parents?"

"Persons who failed to marry in accordance with the plan of life. The perfect plan is set at time of birth. Persons selected for each other by the guides sometimes fail to unite in wedlock through worldly considerations of wealth, station, vanity, etc., overcoming the guide's influence, particularly when the plan of life had theretofore been departed from. Such mismated couples either produce no offspring at all, which is frequently the penalty, or, producing them, they are inferior mentally and physically, exhibiting retrogression generally, from the degree attained by either of the



parents. Where the parents have been designed for each other, the converse is true; they are fruitful, and the children an advancement in the scale of development, an improvement upon the parents mentally and physically."

"How is one to know who is designed to meet one in wedlock?"

"The course of life is so directed that, however remote or far apart may be their native places, they eventually encounter each other, thus furnishing the opportunity, which is furthermore aided and abetted by the guide's influence. There is one physical indication which may be generally relied upon as significant of mismated union: the age of the wife exceeding that of the husband. This is very rare in rightly mated unions, being permitted or designed only in instances as compensation, as where, *v. g.*, the husband is weak minded."

"How is it that children born out of wedlock are inferior?"

"Through the low grade of the guide—those of high grade never being appointed to such. When apparent exceptions occur, the explanation is that the parents were designed for each other, but failed to unite in wedlock, and furthermore, when the mental quality, although possibly high for such conditions, is sure to be attended by low moral tendencies."

"I was designed to be a nun, wasn't I?"

"No."

"Why, was anyone ever selected for me?"

"Yes."

"Have I ever met him?"

"Yes."

"Can you tell me who it was?"

"Yes, the young farmer who lived not far from your



home with his mother and sister. This is a subject which I would not have selected for your first lesson, but you should know it and, perhaps, it is as well to have it explained now."

It was, however, very interesting to Kate, and as she learned it, her mind reverted to the circumstances attending her own course of life.

"Were my parents designed for each other?"

"They were."

"Is the guide the same for each of persons designed for each other?"

"Yes."

"For those not designed for each other?"

"No, in such cases the husband's guide and the wife's guide are apt to be at variance on many subjects and that leads to trouble. One of the guides, however, may so dominate the other that there is practically only one. Or the guide of one, for selfish purposes, may yield so much to the other that the directing influence is single."

"Were you ever on earth, a person, as I am?"

"Yes. I was an English potentate more than two hundred years ago. In becoming your guide, my purpose was to compensate, through you, for the wrongs done in the flesh to the people of Ireland, from whom you are descended."

"Why, what can you ever hope to do through me?"

"I intend that you shall become a great reformer, by teaching the great truths of life as they will be given to you by me."

"Dear me," said Kate, "this seems preposterous! I am certain you have made a very poor selection."

Turning, however, from that, she went on:

"Is my little brother here to-day?"

"Yes, but not so little as you think him to be."



"Why, he was only twelve when he died."

"True, but there is nothing absolutely stationary or fixed in the universe. The changes of growth attend here as on earth. Your brother has developed a fine specimen of manhood."

"Do they become old and feeble over there?"

"No, the young and undeveloped, as they attain to favorable conditions, grow on to maturity and perfect development, and the old and decrepit recover the conditions of their prime."

"How could father recognize him then?"

"For such meetings the form is temporarily assumed under which they formerly knew each other."

"Is that true, too, of little babes who die twenty or thirty years before their parents?"

"It is."

"Who looks after the little things when they die?"

"Relatives already here, or persons delegated for that purpose."

"But, not knowing them, I should think they would shrink from such strangers."

"They would, and are therefore first met by little children of their own age who beguile them, as only such little tots can, till they come to know those who are to have charge of them."

"Are they sometimes brought back to see their mothers?"

"Yes, often daily at first, or till they become attached to those about them here."

"What do the little things do as they are growing up?"

"They acquire knowledge by learning and by experience, as you do on earth."



"Do you mean to say that they learn to read and write, etc., as we do here?"

"Yes, in order to advance in knowledge and wisdom, the same as with you."

"Must adults, too, who die illiterate, begin like children with the primer?"

"Certainly, there is no other way to begin."

"Then all, over there, are at least able to read and write?"

"Oh no, in the first sphere, and in the third grade of the second, there may be any number of illiterates—none, however, above these."

"Is all knowledge, therefore, acquired here, useful and helpful there?"

"Yes, all right knowledge."

"How?"

"To instruct others and to aid in the discovery of new truths, and in the promotion of true knowledge."

"Then knowledge comes to you over there as it does to us here?"

"Yes, by study and investigation."

"How avails it over there if I know how to do a difficult embroidery or a certain lace?"

"You not only can instruct others, but furthermore, anything you have learned to accomplish on earth, you can produce at will over here, as in embroidery, a painting, a gown or a pudding. By a mere act of the will you produce them here."

"And what I have not learned to do here, I must, over there, begin with as a beginner and learn how to accomplish it before I can produce it?"

"Exactly, I am pleased that you understand me so well."

"Do you see my father often?"



"No, not often. I could only see him if he should be here on any occasion, or if I should go on some duty to his sphere. Spirits can not enter spheres above them, but those of any sphere can visit those below them."

"Well, if my father wishes to communicate anything, will you write it for him?"

"He will develop faster to help himself, but in any measure beyond his strength, I shall be ready to aid."

"Is he happy?"

"He is comfortable and as happy as one may be in the second sphere."

"What do you mean by the second sphere?"

"The place in spirit life next higher than the first sphere."

"How many spheres are there?"

"Seven, in regular order, from first up to and including the seventh, which is the sphere of the perfect."

"Are these spheres states of existence, of environment, or are they real places?"

"They are well-defined places, often millions of miles apart."

"Is the seventh sphere heaven?"

"It comports with your idea of heaven."

"What is the first sphere?"

"The abode of unrepentant persons who died in sin."

"As they repent and become better, do they go to the second?"

"Yes, by gradation."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Each sphere is divided into three grades numbered first, second and third. Of these grades, the third is the lowest, and advancement is by progressing to the second, then to the first, and thence, by advancing to the



next higher sphere where entrance is again at the third or lowest grade, and so on upward."

"Do they ever retrograde, that is, having attained a certain sphere, fall back to a lower one again?"

"Certainly."

"How?"

"By their own fault, by indolence, by selfishness,—by sinning as on earth."

"And are the spirits there capable of sinning!"

"Oh yes, and punishments are more severe for sins committed after death. These lapses may occur at any stage previous to the seventh sphere. There is perfection, and failure is impossible."

"Is the first sphere like what we call hell?"

"Worse. It varies, however, as such grades."

"Are those in the third or lowest grade of the first sphere very miserable?"

"Yes, beyond mortal comprehension."

"What is the principal feature of such misery?"

"Gnawing anguish over sins which were the blackest possible."

"Are there any evil spirits?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"They are the spirits of wicked persons who died in sin and have never repented. When I say, have not repented, don't understand that repentance alone advances them. It is only the first condition of improvement, and leads to restitution and all that equity or justice requires."

"Are there many evil spirits?"

"Legions."

"Where are they?"

"Their abode is the first sphere."



"Never in any other?"

"No."

"Do any of them ever repent, become better and progress higher?"

"Some do."

"Do some continue to offend God by sinning?"

"Yes, and as I said before, such sinning is followed by punishments more dire than for sins of earth life."

"Do evil spirits affect or interfere with mortals?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By inducing insanity, lusts of the flesh, inordinate love of money or of power to their ultimate undoing."

"Why! I've read that insanity is a disease!"

"It certainly is a disease or, rather, the result of disease, and the view of it held on earth by scientific men of the medical profession is generally correct; but there are instances where disease and impairment of function would not necessarily be attended or followed by insanity were it not for the interference of these evil spirits, who find in the disordered organism the material opportunity of conditions for interference."

"May not evil spirits come about me here?"

"We would not let them stay—they know better than to come."

"Then a strong or high guide can limit their operations?"

"Well, yes; a guide from the higher spheres has no trouble in protecting his ward from evil spirits."

"How does he do it?"

"That is easy enough, for evil spirits are all cowards."

"Do these spirits of first sphere ever plead excuse of ignorance?"

"In the second grade, also in the first, but not in the



third—there we hear no excuses. Repentance may come there, but excuses later. Until they repent, they only curse and complain.”

“Can spirits affect or direct thoughts of men?”

“Yes, that is what occurs in so-called inspiration, although it may be done in ways far more subtle.”

“Are good thoughts apt to be from good spirits?”

“Yes.”

“And bad ones from evil spirits?”

“Not always. Bad thoughts may be stirred by physical environment operating upon an organism depraved or degenerate. Now my child, let that suffice for to-day. I have drawn rather heavily upon your magnetism, and therefore should stop now till you are rested—to-morrow, or your next opportunity.”

“Tell me before you go, please, what you mean by magnetism.”

“By magnetism I designate a force, a resultant of electrical conditions of the body, which we utilize in all manifestations, as in this writing, in rapping, in slate writing, in materialization, etc., etc. It varies very greatly in quality, being much finer or more abundant in some persons than in others. It is also to be found in brutes, but comparatively much coarser in quality, although as between it and that of very degenerate persons the difference may not be so great. It is greatly prized by spirits interested at all in work upon the earth, because it can be utilized in so many ways, as, to give strength, to promote or to restore health, etc., of their earth friends or favorites, and for such ends I have seen unscrupulous spirits stealthily extracting it from the persons of those upon whom they had no claim in order to bestow it upon their own wards or earth friends. Furthermore, I have seen



spirits, when hard pressed for want of it, take the gross magnetism of brutes and use it in strengthening or in assisting their earth favorites, or for some of the cruder forms of manifestations. The magnetism of persons on earth varies in appearance as well as in quality, that emanating from the clean of heart and mind, the unselfish, the truly refined and the rightly cultivated, being whiter than snow and brighter than the sun—too beautiful for description, and visible to us spirits at great distance. In some cases, as for instance yours, even when drawn upon till quite used up, it is supplied again in a short time, much as a good well will quickly refill after having been drawn upon to the last bucketful. Now, take a little rest, and then go into the open air for a while, and may God bless you."



## CHAPTER XXVII.

As Kate walked in the flower garden the next morning, there was a nervousness in her movement that reflected the perplexed activity of her mind. What if all this message should be true, she thought. If I am content to take the writer at his or her word, then I am easily satisfied, sure enough. But what else can I do? for where shall I seek confirmation or verification of what it says? It can not be bad, that's certain, anyway, for the writing went on even when the paper actually touched the holy water bottle! It does not seem intent on evil, for everything written so far is expressive of good purpose, and it seems just as religious in language as Mother Superior is, and calls me "my child," just as she does. What would she say if she knew all this? How I do wish I might tell her! Maybe it will come out so I can before long. The "young farmer" is Frank Dunn plain enough—and it was designed that I should have married him! Well, well! I wonder if that can be true! If it is, how was it ever designed that I should be here! Really, it is the strangest thing! I wonder if I should go and tell Father Vincent all about it! I am more than half inclined to, for it may be some deception to lead me away to my destruction. I will wait till he, she or it comes to write again, and then I'll ask something about my father or brother that will settle it as good or bad. Perhaps they may come, and I can ask them themselves, and then I shall know.



Four days, however, passed before another opportunity presented to take up the writing again. Kate had appeared so improved to the Superior, that she directed the doing of many things which could not be postponed longer. She was beginning to be impatient, because now, after three weeks' confinement, the doctor discovered there was no indication of union, and a new device must be employed to keep the fractured surfaces in closer apposition. Her impatience was not over her personal discomfort under confinement, but because she must yet be so long restrained from looking after so many things which required her personal attention. She must intrust more and more to her secretary, and thus it was that Kate's time was so occupied in the days following the writing.

However, one afternoon, with her work done early and out of the way, Kate sat down to the writing again, and the instant she submitted her hand upon the paper, the preliminary circular movement began.

"How is it," began Kate, "that you are here to write the moment I sit down for it?"

"Because I am generally near you."

"Is your abode near where we are?"

"Where I can watch over you."

"But yet a good ways off?"

"Yes, but I come as quick as thought."

"What kind of questions do you prefer I should ask?"

"Ask such questions as pertain to heavenly truths—let common sense be the basis of your questioning."

"What are those lights I see so often?"

"Generally they are glimpses of my raiment, but you have also seen some that were the partially successful efforts of some of our helpers to manifest their faces."

"We thought they were miraculous!"



“ They may appear as such to those who do not comprehend. But a miracle, in the sense of a suspension of the laws of nature, has never yet been accomplished and never will be. Whatever appears miraculous, is accepted as such simply because the principle underlying it is not understood. Every manifestation of spirit power is accomplished by the scientific manipulation of natural forces in strict accordance with the laws governing throughout the universe. Nature’s laws tolerate no exception anywhere. All those phenomena which have been accepted as miracles, and are regarded with religious reverence as such, even to this day, were accomplished through processes as scientific as any which take place in the chemist’s laboratory. In convents and monasteries, where the simple diet and regular lives of the inmates favor it, such exhibitions through spirit agency have often occurred, and the name of many a ‘ saint ’ has been associated with a miracle which, had the laws underlying the ‘ appearance ’ been understood, would have been regarded in a different light altogether.”

“ Your raiment must be beautiful if it is all like the little I saw of it.”

“ That is my home raiment, but I do not always wear it when outside.”

“ What sphere are you in ?”

“ Sixth.”

“ What is the manner of a spirit’s advancement from one sphere to another ?”

“ Most unexpected and sudden. Often when most discouraged, we hear the welcome: ‘ Come up higher.’ ”

“ Are those spheres planets like our earth here ?”

“ More wonderful than your question would suggest. You must not think they are worlds of material, like the one you now occupy, nor are they simply states.”



"I noticed several times that you seemed to hesitate over the spelling of a word, and sometimes misspelled; how is that?"

"For a period of about three hundred years I have never once tried to communicate or to associate with mortals, only as I watched over you."

"Do you have houses there?"

"Yes, too beautiful for description here."

"Do the guides prepare the houses or homes in advance for us?"

"They assist: your deeds, good or bad, determine where your home will be, and what your house shall be."

"Are the dwellings in the first sphere as good as ours here on earth?"

"Much inferior: in the third grade they are filthy hovels, and the clothing and all the surroundings likewise filthy, offensive and wretched."

"Is there any happiness even in the first grade of the first sphere?"

"Not much, but there has been an awakening. They see the errors which caused their degradation."

"Do spirits experience sensations of heat and cold, of being wet or dry, etc.?"

"Yes, just as you do—I mean when here on earth. In our higher spirit homes it is always equable."

"Is the clothing worn by spirits for any practical purpose?"

"Most assuredly; what else is it for? Do you think the foolish mock modesty of mortals would here find favor?"

"Do you understand music?"

"No, but I like to hear it."

"Can you explain how sounds produced by a physical



mechanical instrument can affect your spiritual bodies so as to be heard ?”

“Particles aerial are displaced, causing thereby vibrations which are as perceptible to us as to you. Let such questions, unless very necessary, wait till later.”

“Did you know anything of spirit manifestation when in earth life ?”

“No: many things which I then looked upon as sin I see here were only my own misguided ideas.”

“Were you not therefore surprised to find it all so different upon going over ?”

“Yes, I was first shocked, then indescribably relieved and happy beyond conception of mortal man.”

“Is it usual for spirits to surround a deathbed ?”

“Yes.”

“For what purpose ?”

“To welcome the spirit, to guide and instruct it.”

“What does one first behold, after death ?”

“Generally what the eyes closed upon in death is the first seen in spirit life. To this, of course, must be added the presence of friends gone before. If the one dying is unconscious for some time, he or she may be conveyed to the new home ere the eyes open in consciousness, and, to avoid shock, a duplicate of the earth chamber may be fitted up in which to meet the friends on the return of consciousness, and that, gradually, the spirit may be introduced to its new surroundings.”

“Is the spirit, on passing over, generally first met by the guide ?”

“No; the nearest and dearest friends are usually the first to meet it. The guide is there, but can you imagine a more unpleasant condition than, upon passing over, to be first met by a stranger ?”

“Then they don’t go right before God to be judged ?”



“ Oh no; they are ‘ judged ’ by their own deeds, from which there is no escaping.”

“ Is it not of great helpful value to have a good guide—I mean one from higher spheres ?”

“ Yes, all you can imagine.”

“ Is it a fair inference because a man is successful, great or famous in this world, that his guide is of a high order ?”

“ No, not always. I have seen troops of helpers and self-appointed guides, several thousand in number, attendant upon a single mortal who from the world’s standpoint was considered great or successful. But they were moved by selfish motives, as was the man also, and their help only promoted a great life error.”

“ What kind of spirits are the most frequent here upon the earth ?”

“ Second sphere spirits—in this country chiefly of Indians who formerly lived here.”

“ Why do they remain about the earth ?”

“ To obtain the experience and knowledge that was not theirs in earth life.”

“ Do Indians have Indian spirit guides ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Who are the guides of the colored people ?”

“ Spirits of colored people in our world.”

“ Do all spirits know the things you have written me ?”

“ No, I have given instruction to you which is as new to lower sphere spirits as it is to you. I assure you it is not always an easy matter to make clear to them, for those second sphere spirits are sometimes very obtuse.”

“ Those are the spirits who sometimes retrograde, I suppose ?”



“Even regularly appointed guides may retrograde, and their lapsing is the true explanation, oftener than the world suspects, of why some persons fall into some vice previously unknown, as drunkenness, or, debauchery, or other sudden turn to an evil course.”

“Why do those in lower spheres presume to become guides before they are sufficiently advanced to be wise and strong?”

“Because they are over desirous of experience, perhaps conceited, or maybe they think that by rendering such service they can further their own interests. But any labor, whatever, with such element of selfishness in it, is sure to be lost.”

“May not a low sphere guide, because well disposed and progressive, be a good guide, lacking only in advantages of learning, experience and discipline?”

“Yes.”

“What is the most efficient means to promotion or advancement there?”

“The helping of others.”

“What most of all retards or opposes improvement and advancement?”

“Selfishness.”

“Is the spirit of my brother here?”

“Yes, he is with you a great deal. He likes to be near you, and besides, he has his earth lessons—experience to acquire.”

“Can he write through my hand, as you do?”

“He is learning, and may do so soon. It was he, assisted by others, who did the rapping a while ago, hoping to be able, thereby, to forewarn you of your father’s approaching death.”

“Are there many spirits about on the earth?”

“Myriads,”



“Are they everywhere, indoors and out?”

“Yes, no wall is so thick and no lock so fast as to limit or confine them.”

“Then, they may witness what is done in secret?”

“Yes, there is no place, however inclosed, and no spot however dark, but has its ‘cloud of witnesses.’ No one is ever anywhere absolutely alone.”

“Do evil spirits ever take possession of animals or birds or insects to annoy?”

“Not that I know of.”

“Are whirlwinds and tempests ever the work of evil spirits?”

“No, they are the result of irregularities of Nature.”

“Have men always been influenced by spirits?”

“Yes, by dreams and visions when there was no other mode of communication.”

“Did I understand you to say that our sins came from within, or are they suggested by evil spirits?”

“Most small sins and shortcomings are from within. If an evil spirit can not get possession of a person, we can not always prevent its making evil suggestions, for example: you have a child, you love it, it is your duty to protect it, even if for no other reason. The child comes in contact with a bad child. You can easily say: come, you must not go with nor like that child. So far, your task is an easy one. But now comes the time to exercise care, oftentimes great caution, for the evil child likes your child, and feeling piqued that you will not countenance its faults, it is continually about, trying to influence your child, maybe only by a word, yet that word awakens more of evil in your child than you have ever seen in it before.”

“What do you think of the course of life I have chosen?”



"I am glad that you did not ask that question earlier, because when I tell you now, how grieved and disappointed I was by your coming here, you will better understand the reasons therefor. By confining yourself here, you deprive yourself of the varied earth experience which is essential to your unfoldment and development. Remember that the sum of experience must be the same for all, and what you fail to acquire during earth life you must obtain at great disadvantage after you have left this plane. I exerted my influence to the utmost to prevent you coming to this place, but so great was the counter-influence of others, chiefly ignorant Catholics, that my work counted for little. One of the objects I had in mind in establishing this form of communication was to be enabled, thereby, to rescue you from this foolish elimination of yourself from the world and its lessons, so essential to your welfare hereafter."

"Why, who do you mean by 'ignorant Catholics?'"

"I mean the spirits of those who were Catholics in earth life, and who are Catholics yet, over here."

"Why, you astonish me!"

"Oh, yes, there are Catholics and Protestants, Jews and atheists, agnostics and fanatics, just the same as on earth—I should say, of course, in the lower spheres."

"Well, I am surprised!"

"You would not be if you really knew how very truly death is merely a change from one condition of existence to another. Death adds nothing to one's knowledge, and deprives it of nothing. It is simply a change of habitat, so to speak, often so slight at first sight that, after having passed over, one may not be able for some time to realize that the 'portals of death' have indeed been passed."



“Do you have churches, too, over there?”

“Yes, and preachers and preaching in second and third spheres.”

“What is your religion?”

“Well, the helping of others to the end that they may help themselves or, to express it otherwise, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.”

“What would you advise me to do now?”

“To leave this place, and to abandon this convent life without delay, and to return courageously to your proper field in the world. When you have done this, I shall take up your instruction and direct you further. Go at once—lose no time in thinking of it; this is my urgent request and the prayerful wish of your brother as he stands here at your side. Go, as you prize your opportunities in this world, your welfare and happiness in the next, and may God bless you?”

“Should I explain to the Superior why I go?”

“I think it would be useless to attempt it, but if you prefer to try, you may do so. Good-bye for this time. Be of good heart, and remember that in every trial there am I at your side to do all in my power to help you.”



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

When Kate retired to her narrow iron cot that night, thoughts crowding each other kept sleep in waiting till long after midnight. When at length, and after many efforts to induce it, her eyes closed in forgetfulness, she slept uneasily and so lightly that at early dawn, on the first stroke of the matin bell, she was awake again in a world which, to her vision, had undergone such a change that the most familiar things about her appeared altered in the new light in which she now saw everything. The ordinary aspect of all about her was lost, even the tones of the angelus bell seemed changed or strange, and the sisters, going to and fro, like persons hardly known, among whom she seemed to be and yet not of them.

Upon going up to the infirmary after breakfast for her assignment for the day, she found the Superior as gracious as ever, and, fortunately, a short task awaiting her. "Do not remain indoors so much, my child," she said to Kate, "for it seems to me you do not look so well lately." Assuring her that she was very well, but had not slept so restfully as usual last night, Kate went to her room and seated herself at her work with a strange feeling of irksomeness. All else but the new communications seemed dull and commonplace, and her interest and her thoughts were held, to the exclusion nearly of every other thing, by this wonderful revelation! It all appeared so reasonable, so in accordance with jus-



tice, so probable, even so true, that she found herself accepting it more and more, and directing her thoughts and her plans conformably thereto. If she left the convent, where would she go? Not to her people, surely—at least, not at once, for she clearly anticipated how they would regard such a step. Of her old friends and acquaintances in Plainfield, there was hardly one to whom she could in confidence turn under conditions like these confronting her. However, she had very little money yet of her own, and she must, for a time at least, count on the friendly hospitality of some one. She would write to Mr. Ryan, the old shoemaker at Plainfield, an old-time friend of her father and mother, and who, accompanied by his wife, took “harvest dinner” at the old homestead on an occasion heretofore referred to. If she might stay with them for a little, she felt sure she would soon find something to do to support herself, probably by getting together a class in music.

Acting at once on the thought, she sent a letter to Mr. Ryan, and a day later received a reply in which, although kind and well-intended, there was nevertheless so much of advice—of protest against the step which would bring “shame and disgrace to herself and her family,” that the meagre assurance of their welcome at the end of the letter was not sufficient to soothe the wound it gave her pride. So confidently had she counted upon unqualified welcome, that she was greatly disappointed, having permitted herself to so proceed with her mental preparations for abandoning the convent that her plans were ready for action on the arrival of the letter. She had concluded that it was useless for her to remain, for her heart was no longer in the work. How could it be! Even her own dear brother prayed



for her relinquishment of it! If she was designed to be a wife, and to fill a useful place in the world, why should she hide herself away from it? She never shrank from duty, as she recognized it, and she would not now. She would take her place in the world, and she only wished that she might, by placing her new light before the Superior and the sisters, send them to their appropriate places in the world, to their great advantage also. If they knew the half of what she had learned, the convent would soon be empty.

Repulsed by old Mr. Ryan's pious exhortation to "keep her place with the holy nuns," she began to consider anew the difficulty which confronted her at her first step. Would it do to write to Doctor Agens? He surely would not be likely to urge against her proposition any advice to remain in the convent if she preferred to leave, and he would not consider her a disgrace to herself nor to any one else. Why did she not think of that before! They were just the people who would receive her, and with whom she would like to be, for was there ever a better hearted soul than Mrs. Agens, and the doctor too, for that matter! Yes, she would write them at once, and ask them to answer immediately, and if the reply was favorable, she could yet start so as to reach Plainfield before Sunday. She was aware of the probability of the letter lying in the post office a day or two before being called for or taken over to Cook's Corners, and she was therefore prepared to understand delay that might keep her waiting till the week following, but she would send it and hope for its direct delivery. As promptly as came the reply from Mr. Ryan, so came the reply written, by Mrs. Agens, breathing in every line their welcome and expressing their pleasure in anticipation of seeing her,



and of having her with them. "The doctor says," wrote Mrs. Agens, "that he never did approve of your being a nun—he says: 'let the homely old maids be the nuns.'" The letter stated furthermore, that Ralph would meet her with a team at High Falls, if she would telegraph the time of her expected arrival there.

This letter reached her in the evening, and after supper she went up to the storeroom and asked sister Alberta for her hand bag which, with the trunks and satchels brought by the sisters at their coming, were stored away in an apartment there for that purpose. As she handed the bag to Kate, Alberta looked at her with questioning eyes, but said nothing, for she had not so forgotten her resolution as to question her in a matter like this. Taking the bag to her room, Kate put into it her few belongings, together with the little French clock, and placing it under her desk, she felt sure at last, that now she was ready to get away on the minute. She had decided, after thinking of it, that she would go without any explanation to the Superior whatever. She knew how utterly she would fail in any attempt to justify her course without being privileged to explain all by revealing the source of her new information, and even submitting the writing itself, which she would be asked to do but which, of course, she could not. It would be better to go without any explanation at all than to attempt one and fail, and failing, to go nevertheless. She regretted that she must leave the Superior when, crippled as she was, she depended upon her assistance so much, but, of course, the place would at once be filled by one of the sisters. Anyway, if the Superior's favor and her own tenure of the position rested, even to a limited degree, upon the Superior's belief that she had been signally favored by visions of miraculous



lights, and she felt certain that it did, she would feel relieved to know that some one else was placed in it, now that there was no miracle about it.

Thus, with everything in readiness and before retiring, she wrote a note for the Superior, briefly stating that she was returning to the world, thanking her for all her kindness, and bidding her good-bye. With this under her pillow she sought sleep, keeping fixed in her mind the determination to awaken at four o'clock in order to take the early morning train for High Falls. But nearly an hour before that time, she awoke with a start and in fear that she had overslept. Reassured by the dormitory clock, she tried to rest yet another half hour, but soon becoming too nervous and too anxious to remain longer, she arose and began to make ready slowly and quietly for her departure. When carefully dressed and all ready, she stole downstairs on tiptoe, and noiselessly unlocking the office door, entered and placed the letter for the Superior upon her desk there. Then, taking her bag from the desk in the next room, she returned to the hall, and, as she was hurrying toward the front door, she saw old sister John the bell-ringer of the convent, coming toward her from the far end with her little brass lantern in her hand. For a moment she hesitated between returning to the office till the sister passed or hastening so as to reach the short cross hall which led to the main entrance, before the sister saw her. Running forward with no fear of being heard, for old sister John was as deaf as a post, she turned quickly into the cross section, and hastily drawing the great bolts of the front door, she set the spring or day-lock which secured the entrance, as she drew the door shut behind her, and hastened away down the driveway.



After a little waiting in the station, during which she sent forward a telegram informing the doctor of the hour of her train's arrival, she entered one of the coaches after the train, with much puffing and swinging of lanterns, had backed into the station, and taking a seat near the middle of the long row, empty at that early hour, she was soon speeding through the dawn past sleepy looking farmhouses and over stretches of barren fields toward High Falls. As the rising sun, a little later, dried up the white night-fog that lay along the valley bottom, the prospect from her window, widening and brightening, drew her thoughts from herself and the events which had absorbed her mind for several days. With a comforting sense of her changed surroundings, she became composed, and a little later drowsy, and then, falling asleep with her hand bag for a pillow, she slumbered through the balance of her journey, or until she was roused by the conductor as the train was approaching High Falls.

As she stepped from the train she saw Ralph awaiting her on the platform.

"Hello Kate," said he, coming forward with a boyish smile brightening his ruddy face, "how d'ye do?"

"Pretty well, Ralph—how do you do? How long have you been waiting?"

"Oh, 'bout an hour," he answered.

"Well, come; let us have something to eat—I'm hungry," and crossing to a restaurant opposite the station, they lunched leisurely and talked of Plainfield happenings until Ralph, looking round at the clock on the wall behind him, said: "I guess we'd better be goin'," whereupon they went out to where the horse was tied in the rear of the station, and drove away towards Cook's Corners, where they arrived a little before dark.



The doctor and Mrs. Agens gave Kate cordial welcome and, as they all sat down to the supper awaiting Kate's arrival, the doctor said that, "except for appearing a little tired, Kate looked as fine as ever."

"Thank you, doctor," she replied, "I don't know why I should look any worse than usual for my stay at the convent, I am but little older, and my duties there were not such as to leave me bent or broken."

"Oh, I know," returned the doctor, good naturedly, "but nuneries are not good conservatories of beauty, or else the inmates were originally so homely they turned to God when disregarded by man," adding with a chuckle, "like the bad penny."

At Mrs. Agens' suggestion, Kate retired early, because "traveling tired anybody half to death," and she wanted Kate to be well rested for "good, hard visiting to-morrow, to make up for lost time."

"Yes," added the doctor, "I suppose she has learned such long prayers at the convent that she must begin early or go to bed late."

"Oh, no, doctor," returned Kate, "I do not believe that praying is all there is of life."

"Good!" he exclaimed, as he stamped his cane on the floor, "if you learned that and nothing more, your time at the convent has not been thrown away."

When Kate came downstairs next morning, rested and refreshed by a good night's sleep, she found Mrs. Agens in the dining-room arranging the dishes of buttered toast and eggs and hot Johnny cake upon the table, which Sara had just brought in from the kitchen.

"Well, good-morning!" she called out cheerily, "I heard you stirring, and so I told Sara to bring in the breakfast, for I knew you would be down in a minute."

"Good-morning!" returned Kate, "you are as good



and thoughtful as ever, Mrs. Agens," as she seated herself opposite.

As Mrs. Agens proceeded to turn the coffee, Kate asked: "Where's the doctor?"

"Oh, he's had to go on a call and couldn't wait, and so I told him I'd wait and breakfast with you. Ralph, he's gone to Plainfield on an errand and so we've got all the time there is to visit to ourselves."

Then, after saying how greatly the breaking up of Kate's old home was regretted by the community, she gave a running account of the principal events of the place during the past year. Of all this there was nothing which so shocked and sadly interested Kate as what she was told of the downward career of John Harmon. Soon after she had left Plainfield for the convent, he began to drink, and rapidly giving way more and more to the habit, he neglected his business which soon after neglected him, and falling lower and lower, became such a blear-eyed, besotted habitue of the village barrooms, so changed from what he used to be, and so repulsive, that his former friends—even the doctor—could not tolerate him longer. Although she might also have given a bit of interesting information concerning Frank Dunn, she refrained from doing so, probably out of consideration for Kate's feelings.

In reply to Mrs. Agens' eager questions, Kate recited her experiences at the convent, describing the internal arrangement of the place, its management, etc., and gave her impressions of the institution and of its inmates. Mrs. Agens was greatly interested in the conduct of the departments, the division of labor and the order and discipline, all under the single management of the Superior.

"Why, she must be a real smart kind of a woman,



to do all that!" she exclaimed. "I wonder how such a woman can throw her life away in a convent, when she probably might marry and have a good home of her own."

"Oh, she thinks she is doing a much better work than housekeeping for herself," returned Kate.

When the doctor returned about noon, Kate went over much of the same ground again in reply to his inquiries, and then proceeded to give him a minute account of the wonderful writing. As she entered upon the subject, the doctor listened with a curious look in his eyes, as much as to say: now here is some hysterical nonsense; but as she proceeded he became seriously interested, and asked her to read to him something of it, just as she had received it. Running upstairs, she took the manuscript from her hand bag, and returning to the doctor, began to read from the beginning of it. Before she had proceeded far, he stopped her and, calling to Mrs. Agens, he said: "Come here and listen to this—here's something that beats old Mrs. Carter's cup-tossing!" As Kate read on, Mrs. Agens exclaimed at intervals: "Well, did you ever!" while the doctor as often struck the floor with his cane and gave an emphatic nod of his head as if in approval. When she had finished, the doctor asked: "You didn't make that up out of your own head, did you?" with a quizzical look in his eyes.

"Why, doctor!" exclaimed Kate, "I never even thought of such things as are written here!"

"Did the ideas," he continued, "come into your head, after each question, as you wrote along?"

"No!" exclaimed Kate in a protesting tone, "I never had the least idea of what was being written till I read it afterwards."



“Well tell us,” he queried, “how the writing was done.”

“All I can tell you about it,” said Kate, shaking her head, “is, that when I put my hand, holding the pencil, on the paper, some unseen force seems to make it go—just as if I should clasp my hand over yours and write with it; but of course, I don’t feel any fingers or any touch whatever.”

“Well, it’s strange!” said the doctor, “but I’ve read of something like this before.”

“Have you indeed!” exclaimed Kate with a look of relief, “I supposed there never was such a thing!”

“Oh yes,” returned the doctor, “this is a big world, and many things are happening in it all the time. “Now,” looking at his watch, “I’ve got to go again after dinner, and you can continue your visit with mother till I get back, and then I’d like to see, myself, how this writing is done. Will you try for me then?”

“Oh, certainly,” answered Kate, “and I’ll let you ask all the questions.”

“Good!” he exclaimed—“now let us go to dinner.”



## CHAPTER XXIX.

When the doctor returned, about the middle of the afternoon, he reminded Kate of her promise.

"Oh yes," she replied, laying down the Farmer, "I've got some paper here and a pencil all ready for it."

Mrs. Agens tumbled the stockings she was darning into the basket, and crossing the room, seated herself on the lounge, as the doctor drew his chair up to the table at the end of it, and upon which Kate was making ready for the writing. When everything was in order, Kate placed her hand holding the pencil upon the paper, and the movement began, first in circles and then in double loops, as it had done theretofore in the preliminary exercise, the doctor and Mrs. Agens watching her closely.

"D'you mean to say, Kate," asked Mrs. Agens, with an air of incredulity, "that you are not doing that?"

"I certainly am not doing it," she answered, "don't you see? I'm not moving my hand—it just goes itself."

"Now," said the doctor, as if curiously impatient, "let us see it write," whereupon the movement stopped.

"Well, ask some question—that was to be your privilege, you know," said Kate.

For a moment the doctor seemed a trifle embarrassed, but glancing at Mrs. Agens he said: "I'm going to see if it knows now whether old Mrs. Niles is going to get well or not—in a week or ten days I'll know myself. Then, clearing his throat, he asked: "Can you tell fortunes—that is, is the future known to you?"



"Yes," began the writing, "where the plan of life is followed, spirits in the higher spheres can foretell events correctly. But most lives depart so far from the perfect plan, and foretelling or fortune telling being chiefly the work of second sphere spirits, predictions are, as a rule, for these two reasons generally very unreliable."

"I declare!" said the doctor, "there seems to be some sense in it, providing," as he looked sharply at Kate, "you are not doing this yourself."

"Why, doctor!" she exclaimed with an injured air, "don't you believe me?"

"Oh yes, Kate," he answered, "but it seems just as if you were writing yourself. But I shan't doubt you again."

The writing began again: "Most mediums and fortune tellers are, as a rule, influenced by second sphere spirits, many of them Indians, who assume to do what is impossible under ordinary conditions and what no spirit, immeasurably more competent from the higher spheres, would, for a moment, presume to undertake. Spirits from the higher spheres look with disfavor, generally, upon communication with mortals."

"Why so? I should think that giving to the world a correct view of the conditions of life here and hereafter would be just what the world needs," said the doctor.

"Quite so, and when the world is ready for it such information and instruction will be given. The time, however, is only now drawing near when the human mind and conditions on earth are sufficiently developed to justify the introduction of a new revelation."

"Heaven speed the day!" exclaimed the doctor. "Well now, what is it which constitutes one person a medium and another not?"



"It is an inborn quality presenting properties by which we are enabled to affect or operate the physical body of the possessor, or some part of it. The possessor of this mediumistic property can not justly claim any credit for it, because he or she had no more to do in determining it than in predetermining the color of the hair or of the eyes. It is neither a mark of intellectual endowment nor of moral worth—indeed the most marked mediumistic quality may be found in a person so low in the scale of intelligence and morality that spirits from the higher spheres would find association impossible, and, for that reason, it is not at all infrequent that such rare excellence of mediumistic faculty is quite unavoidably in the hands of unprincipled, low sphere spirits—do you understand me?"

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed the doctor. "Yes, I understand that plain enough, for it throws light on a subject I could never before understand to my own satisfaction. Then," he began again, "the high spirits can look farther into the future than the lower ones?"

"Yes, spirits from the third sphere farther than those in the second, the fourth than those in the third, and so on."

"It is of greater value or help, therefore, to anybody, to have a guide who is high up in the spheres?"

"Yes, all you can imagine."

"What determines the selection of a high guide for a child?"

"Its intellectuality and the work designed for it in earth life. In so far as intellectuality is inherited, and good morals the result of careful training, so far do intellectual parents of moral lives predispose the way of high sphere spirits to become guides of their children."



"But we know" said the doctor, "that great men have been born of lowly and ignorant mothers."

"Yes, but no talented man was ever born of an inferior mother. She may have been poor and undeveloped, yet, the superior qualities were there, latent, perhaps, in that mother who transmitted them to her obscure babe."

With his first purpose still in mind, the doctor asked: "Do you object to test questions?"

"We have higher purposes to occupy our time. If you knew how repugnant tests are to me—anyway, the person who will not believe without them, would not with them."

"Well," said the doctor, hesitating in his search for a question, "do you spirits eat or drink, or can you partake of what is prepared on our tables?"

"Yes, in the lower spheres there is much eating and drinking, and even in some of the higher we may partake of our beautiful fruit. In a spiritual way I might partake of what is prepared upon your table, for example: I see a pudding there, and I may will one for myself like it, which I can taste."

"Well, did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Agens, "that's why some people I've heard of place chairs at table for absent ones I suppose."

"Are some substances," continued the doctor without noticing what Mrs. Agens had said, "more difficult than others for spirits to pass through?"

"Yes, the metals."

"Are some gases difficult or obnoxious?"

"Yes. I do not know of any that can be called pleasant."

"Is matter eternal?"

"Yes, indestructible, indescribable, eternal."



"There!" exclaimed the doctor, "that is my belief, too!"

"Can you tell me where in the brain or body is the soul?"

"The soul is the thinking part of the composite which constitutes the human individual. It is not one with the spiritual body, for it bears a relation to it similar to that which it does to the physical body. It is the ego. It was not created in its entirety, as is ordinarily believed, but evolved from inferior degrees of intelligence, quite as the physical body was evolved from lower forms of life. It is still in a process of unfolding or development which has perfection for its goal. The spiritual body is the exact counterpart of the physical, infolding and pervading it in detail and as a whole, from the minutest molecule to the body in its entirety. Upon separation at death, every feature, every limb, every organ, every tissue even to the minutest, is duplicated in the spiritual body. To illustrate their identity of appearance, use or function, and at the same time their interdependence, I may tell you that in instances where amputation of a leg or an arm has been done in earth life, we still see remaining there the spiritual leg or arm, resembling the remaining leg or arm exactly as did the amputated member."

"That's wonderful!" said the doctor. "We must preserve this paper, or this writing, for I want to think these things over by and by at my leisure."

"What becomes of the life principle in birds and animals—do they pass over, as you say, too?"

"Yes, here we have all kinds of birds and animals. How could any abode be homelike without them?"

"I'll never wring a chicken's neck without thinking of that," said the doctor.



"I wonder," put in Mrs. Agens, "whether our old 'Maj' still lives over there?"

"Yes," went on the writing again, "he is here with you often, following you or the doctor about as he did in the flesh."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Agens, "can you tell how he looks?"

"He is a large white dog, with brown spots on his sides, shoulder and head."

"That's him exactly!" she exclaimed, "the dear old fellow—don't you remember him, Kate?"

"Well, not very clearly," answered Kate, "it's some five or six years since you had him, isn't it?"

"Yes, six years this coming winter, since he died," answered Mrs. Agens.

"How did you know it was 'Maj,' though?" queried the doctor.

"Those about here told me it was the dog you referred to, and besides, I observed him wag his tail and look towards you when you mentioned his name."

"Why, why!" exclaimed Mrs. Agens.

"Let me ask this question," said the doctor: "What do you think of mind-cure or faith-cure?"

"It is possible to cure many diseases, principally nervous, in that way. It has, however, more of nonsense in it than anything I recall now."

"Good!" shouted the doctor, "that's sound sense, anyway."

"Do the spirits of persons who were idiotic here become intelligent there?"

"Yes, in time. The idiot has to commence here as a little babe."

"And is reason restored to the insane there?"



"Certainly, all ailments and frailties and deformities are ultimately cured here."

"By whom?"

"By physicians here."

"What!" exclaimed the doctor in surprise.

"Oh yes, the physical disability leaves its counterpart in the spiritual, and it requires to be cured just the same. For example, your patient who passed over, they tell me, about a year ago, of consumption, is coughing still, and probably will for some time, but he is improving, and will ultimately be entirely cured."

"Well," said the doctor, "that beats me!"

"The doctors over here," continued the writing, "often assist you earth doctors with your cases—oftener than is suspected, at the solicitation of friends, or for some other good and sufficient reason. I have seen persons eminent in your profession here helping you at your work."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the doctor.

"That's why you have such good luck with your bad cases, perhaps," suggested Mrs. Agens.

"Tell me," resumed the doctor, "what do you think of capital punishment?"

"I think it is wrong, and if you understood or could appreciate the state in which those put to death generally come to us, and how difficult it makes it for them and for us here, you would, too, see how wrong it is."

"Oh! I've been opposed to it on principle these many years," said the doctor.

"What is the condition of a suicide there, does he flee from troubles he knows to those he knows not?"

"That is the truth. I can assure you that the condition of a suicide over here is most deplorable, difficult and miserable."



“What do you think of money-getting—is the biblical estimate of the rich man correct?”

“The rich man becomes avaricious and hard-hearted. Money in itself is not hurtful.”

“Is there any buying and selling over there?”

“Yes, after the fashion of earth, but not in the higher spheres.”

“Is it done to accumulate wealth?”

“No, it is done only for education, entertainment or amusement.”

“What do you think of prohibition?”

“I think it is one of the best social reforms.”

“What of Mormonism?”

“It is rotten to the core. It is the most frightful blot in the history of to-day.”

“What of communionism?”

“Generally, I should not advise it—in some localities, however, it might be admirable.”

“What of Darwin’s origin of species?”

“I know it is in accordance with nature’s laws, and therefore, true. He was an able investigator.”

“I believe everything Darwin ever wrote,” said the doctor.

“What do you think of miscegenation?”

“I know that it is frightfully wrong.”

“Do you consider murder, as we do, the gravest of crimes?”

“No, adultery is a greater sin than murder. When one is murdered, that person is forced, prematurely, into a new environment—it is simply a matter of change involving, of course, loss of opportunities on earth, and augmentation of difficulties here; adultery, and I make no distinction between that and fornication, involves so much affecting the parties to it, both on earth and



here, and is so far-reaching in its consequences, that it transcends all other sins in heinousness and humiliating embarrassment of one's best interests. I declare to you truly, that there is no sin committed or possible on the face of the earth which so seriously affects or destroys one's prospects in this world as does sexual impurity."

"Whew!" exclaimed the doctor, "that's new doctrine!"

"Is the place of Christian ministers generally good in the other world?"

"No, and no worse, generally, than that of others."

"In what sphere are they?"

"All are not selfish or sinful men."

"Are Catholic priests any better off over there?"

"No."

"Is there a personal devil?"

"No, not in the sense in which you use that term; but there are thousands here, any one of whom as vicious, as malevolent, as wicked and degenerate might rightly be called by that name."

"Does not the Christian who lives according to his belief, and believes in accordance with his best knowledge, receive in the next world the reward of his conscientious life?"

"Yes, a man true to his inner consciousness in the body, will easily comprehend and master the great truths of the hereafter."

"From your standpoint now, what do you say should be the chief purpose or principal object of life?"

"To do all the good you can; to get all the knowledge you can; and to keep yourself pure."

At this the doctor slapped his knee with his palm, as



he exclaimed: "Well said! I believe that's the doctrine in a nutshell."

"So do I," ventured Mrs. Agens, "for that takes in the golden rule and the sermon on the mount, all in one—don't you think so, Kate?"

"Why yes," answered Kate, "it seems to me as beautiful as it is brief."

"Now wait a moment," said the doctor to Mrs. Agens, who was about to prolong her talk with Kate, "Have you ever seen Christ?"

"No."

"Why! is that so?" queried the doctor, with an air of surprise. "Have you ever met anyone over there who has seen him?"

"No."

"Well, there is no doubt that there has been such an individual?"

"No, there can be no doubt, because he is an historical person."

"Do you believe that he was the Son of God in the biblical sense?"

"No, he was the son of God only as every other person born into this world is the son of God. But he was a good man, a reformer, far in advance of his age."

"How is it he has not been seen over there?"

"His life was so sinless, so nearly perfect, that upon leaving the earth he entered a high sphere and soon passed from that to perfection. Therefore, none of those now available over here have seen him."

"Have you ever seen God?"

"No."

"Nor anyone who has?"

"No."

"Is God a person?"



"Even the highest and most learned here speculate on that question just as you do—not one knows."

"Do you know or believe that God answers prayer?"

"Not directly, yet the prayer that cometh from the heart has a purifying effect upon the one praying, who realizes, sooner or later, the object of his prayer or its equivalent."

"Is Job a fictitious character?"

"Yes."

"Is King Solomon?"

"No."

"Is David?"

"No."

"To what sphere did Christ go to?"

"I don't know—he was nearely perfect, but not divine."

"Are there fewer in number in the higher spheres?"

"Yes."

"Is the life principle in any, even the lowest forms, dissipated or in any way lost or destroyed upon the destruction of the material form from which it emanated?"

"No, never."

"What is the source of life?"

"God is the source of all life."

"Do you mean directly or through the operation of law?"

"Through the operation of natural law, of course."

"Well, then you would say that spontaneous origin of life is possible?"

"Yes, for in that way, if I understand you, all life originated, developing in the lower forms and thence evolving upward through higher forms to man. *Æons* of time were required for these great processes."

"Do you measure time there by years?"



"Yes."

"Is the sun in sight there?"

"Yes."

"And it rises and sets, as with us?"

"Yes, it seems to rise and set."

"Is it dark there between sunset and sunrise?"

"No."

"Whence is the light?"

"From the sun, reflected from the other planets."

"It seems to me that the conditions are about the same as here."

"Yes, as I have written before, you would hardly perceive the difference in the lower spheres."

"What do you think of reincarnation?"

"It follows as a corollary of what I have already told you of the progressive development of the soul, that reincarnation is a necessary truth. The sum of experience must be the same for all, and while we may obtain, after earth life, much that we require in general and in particular as guides over here, yet, when something still is wanting which can not otherwise be obtained, reincarnation offers the conditions requisite for its accomplishment."

"I never liked that idea," said the doctor, "because it involves severance and separation of ties of friendship and affection which seems cruel and undesirable."

"True, but understand that reincarnation does not take place till such ties are outgrown, disregarded or forgotten. In the lower orders, as the savages or barbarians, it occurs sooner, for like the cat and her kittens, they soon forget; but among the higher orders, the more developed, long periods even ages may intervene."

"Some persons claim to have some kind of intimation



or foggy recollection of a previous existence, and quote that as indicating it."

"Yes, that is possible, and yet, such intimations or suggestions may be from another source, as I can illustrate by reciting a true story, told me by the guide of the young man concerning whom it was related. Some weeks before he was born, his mother, sitting alone one evening in front of the grate gazing at the glowing coals, her fancy constructed there a beautiful landscape, the various features of which were so prominent and well marked that she studied it long with pleased interest. Like all such incidents, it was soon forgotten. In time, her child grew up and, becoming an artist, entered in competition for a notable prize offered for the best piece of original work. For many days he applied himself to his task, evolving upon the canvas the conception formed in his mind, and, when at length it was finished, he took his mother to look at it. As he drew the curtain away exposing the picture to her view, she was surprised to find something familiar in the general appearance of what she understood was to be original work. Studying it some time in an endeavor to recall where she had seen it before, the recollection of the landscape in the embers, years ago, came to her, the exact reproduction of which was there on the canvas before her."

"I never heard of anything like that," said the doctor, "but I don't see why prenatal influences may not impress the mind as surely as they do the body, and I know they do *that*. What do you say of the man who gets rich by fraud or the abuse of confidence?"

"I know that, although he may think his act a smart or clever one because of its immediate or present success, the time will surely come when he will see that it was the most foolish and shortsighted, viewed even



from the standpoint of self, because somehow and sometime, dollar for dollar and penny for penny in equivalence must be repaid, until which, he is as much poorer than he might be as he has taken money wrongfully, and wretched commensurable with the consequences to those he defrauded. I know of instances over here in which very much has been done for others by such debtors, but because the element of self was lurking in it, that is, because it was done principally to better their own conditions, it utterly failed altogether."

"I tell you," said the doctor, looking at his wife, "honesty is not only the best policy—it is the best principle. Tell me," he resumed, "what do you think of the Christian religion generally?"

"In so far as its moral teachings are correct, it accomplishes much good, but in its doctrinal teachings it is a great error and a greater mockery. Men stultify reason in support and defense of the propositions of this religion, so childish, so opposed to experience, to sense and truth that, in any other domain of thought or practice, they would not be admitted to consideration. Bear in mind, when I say this, that I am not unaware nor forgetful of all and so much that has been done through the humanity and morality in this, so-called, Christian religion. Credit should be given for the good that has filtered through it all from the teaching and example of Christ. Do not, however, I implore you, offend God by considering him, a man, a creature, co-equal with Him who is the one supreme Being."

"Really," said Kate, rubbing her arm, "I am getting quite tired."

"Oh! beg your pardon," said the doctor, extending his hand deprecatingly toward Kate, "stop right now."



I got so interested that I never thought of any one else. There is plenty of time coming."

"Why yes," added Mrs. Agens, rising to her feet, "and it's after time for supper, too!" as she bustled away to the kitchen.



## CHAPTER XXX.

After dinner the following day, Sunday, the doctor proposed a drive down to Plainfield, "to show Kate the new Catholic church."

"I would like to go very much," replied Kate, "it seems an age since I was in Plainfield last."

Although the sky was overcast with dark gray clouds, the air was still and mild, and the roads as dry and smooth as in summer. Mrs. Agens and Kate occupied the rear seat of the carriage together, and, as they went along, Mrs. Agens pointed out or commented upon the changes here and there which had taken place during Kate's absence.

"What makes you so still?" asked Mrs. Agens, giving the doctor a little push upon the shoulder, after they had gone some distance.

"Oh, you seem to be doing very well," replied the doctor, looking round with a smile. "The fact is, I'm thinking of that writing—I tell you I can hardly think of anything else."

"Well, don't let that turn your head," said Mrs. Agens, "talk to us a little now and you can think of that when you are on your drives all alone."

"Did you know," said the doctor, hitching round on his seat so as to look at Kate, "they have a new priest in Plainfield now?"

"Why no," answered Kate, "what has become of Father Logan?"

"I don't know, and I guess few of his people care,"



answered the doctor, "when he was leaving Plainfield, he sold the rectory Mr. Cole almost gave away, thinking he was helping the parish, and put the money down in his own pocket."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Kate in astonishment.

"Yes," added Mrs. Agens, "and he made a good penny on it, too, for it brought a good deal more than was paid for it."

"Well," said Kate, "who would ever have thought he would do such a thing!"

"Ah," said the doctor, "these priests like money just as well as anybody else, even though they preach against it. But I don't think he did right, and if this writing is true, he'll have one debt to pay in the next world that we all know of."

"Who is the new priest?" inquired Kate.

"A Father Smyth," answered the doctor.

"Where does he live?" she asked again.

"Oh, they had to go to work and buy a lot on the same street, some distance out, and build a house for him," he answered.

When they reached the church, Kate was much interested in its neat and tasteful appearance and, after commenting admiringly upon it, she said: "That's the kind of church we should have had here when such a man as Father McNally was here!"

"Why! I thought," said Mrs. Agens, "they were glad enough to get rid of him!"

"Oh yes, some were," replied Kate, "who could not appreciate him and were quick to believe everything they heard about him."

"Now then," spoke the doctor over his shoulder, as he drew the horses into the road again, "which way would you like to go now?"



"Out by the new burying ground, please," answered Kate, "and then round by the old farm on the way back."

"All right," said the doctor as they drove away, "but I'm afraid the looks of the old place won't please you."

"Why?" she inquired.

"Oh, they don't keep it up as your father did," he replied, "and it begins to look run down and shiftless."

Just before reaching the burying ground they met a carriage containing Frank Dunn and a woman. Kate bowed smilingly to Frank, who blushed and appeared very surprised at seeing her. As soon as they had passed, Kate said: "I wonder who that woman with Frank is?"

"Why, that's his wife," said the doctor, "didn't you know he was married?"

Kate suspected that the doctor was joking, but on turning an inquiring glance at Mrs. Agens, she saw that it must be the serious truth, for Mrs. Agens nodded assent, but made no reply.

"When was he married?" Kate managed to ask without betraying her feelings.

"About two months ago," answered the doctor, "wasn't it, Myra?"

"Yes, about two months," briefly replied Mrs. Agens, for she surmised it was something Kate was not pleased to hear.

Arrived at the burying ground, Kate alighted and went over to her father's grave, where she knelt for a few moments, and then placing upon it a white geranium she had brought from the doctor's, she returned to the carriage weeping.

"Don't cry, dear," said Mrs. Agens in soothing and sympathetic tones, as the carriage went on again, "you



know it does no good, and," putting her arm around her, "I do not like to see you feel bad."

The doctor looked back as if he would say something to comfort or cheer her, but with evident lack of confidence, he turned away and said: "Dan's been driven single so much, he frets in double harness—see how sweaty he is, while Peg is as dry as a muff."

"Well, you needn't drive so fast," said Mrs. Agens, with emphasis on the word drive.

"I'm not urging them at all," returned the doctor, "they draw the carriage by the reins now."

Kate was a long time in recovering her composure, and even then she was silent and evidently sad.

"Do you say you would like to go round by the old place," asked the doctor, as they approached the stone bridge.

"Oh, yes, please," she answered, and Mrs. Agens added: "Why, of course."

As they were approaching the old farmhouse, by the road skirting the orchard, Kate looked out at the old familiar trees with something of affection in her eyes.

"There is the Spitzenburg tree," said she, pointing it out, "and over there in the second row is the Pound Sweet, and right next to it the Jilliflower," and as they passed farther on, she added: "and there are the Harvest Boughs, and beyond them the Winter Russets—that tree with the bushy top and the one to the right of it. Father used to bury them in a winter pit in the garden every fall, and in the spring they'd come out so mellow, so fresh and so yellow—dear me! how good we children used to think they were!"

As they were passing the house, Kate said: "I wonder what they have done with the Virginia creeper."

"That's the trouble," replied the doctor, "they



haven't done anything with it—it lies on the ground there where it fell down or was blown down, I don't know which."

"And just look at my flower-beds!" she exclaimed, as she looked at the tufts of dry weeds and brambles which evidently had flourished through the summer, where her care had formerly fostered pansies and pinks and tulips and marigolds. "Dear, dear!" she exclaimed in tones of mingled affection and regret, as she turned half about on the seat and looked back at the old house receding now as they sped along the mill road. Then turning to Mrs. Agens, she said: "It makes my heart ache to see the dear old place look so!"

"They're a shiftless lot," said Mrs. Agens, "your father always kept things looking so neat and picked up."

Sara had supper ready when they reached the house, and as they seated themselves at table, the doctor said: "Well, Sara, your promptness will save much suffering and possible death, for I've been as hungry as a bear ever since Kate talked about those winter russets, 'so mellow and so yellow.'"

"Shan't I open a can of pears—wouldn't you like some?" asked Mrs. Agens.

"Not for me," answered the doctor with a shake of his head, "pears 're not winter russets—maybe Kate would like some."

"But she declined also, as they both did Mrs. Agens' suggestion of cherries, the doctor adding: "canned fruit is a mockery and a delusion. There's only one way to rightly enjoy it, and that is to eat it fresh in season—or when it comes from a pit in the spring."

"Well, when you can't always have it in season," returned Mrs. Agens, "the next best thing is to have it in cans."



"True," said the doctor, "and keep them shut tight."

Soon after supper Kate retired to her room, and immediately placing paper upon the little table there, she seated herself, pencil in hand, saying, as the movement began: "Did you mean Frank Dunn when you wrote of the 'young farmer?'"

"The young man," ran the writing, "whom you saw to-day."

"Well, didn't you know he was married?"

"Yes, but when I wrote that you had been designed for each other, I was referring to the past, not to the present or future. In that past, no influence I could exercise was sufficient to impress you with a realization of the choice you were making, nor to overcome your inconsiderate pride, and I plainly foresaw that, as matters were tending, you would marry one never intended for you and so illy adapted that your life would become a great failure. Seeing this, I yielded to the Catholic influences of your old home which, acting through your mother, diverted you from him and ultimately led you to the convent."

In her disappointment, Kate pushed the paper from her and, covering her eyes with her handkerchief, she let go the restraint, holding indifferently her emotions in check since she knelt at her father's grave in the afternoon, and wept long and bitterly.

Drying her eyes, at length, she went over to a rocking-chair near the window, and, with eyes gazing vacantly, became lost to her surroundings in a reverie of the past. Scene followed scene in succession as she dwelt again in the years ago, from the days when her brothers swung her, a little tot, in the shade of the old apple trees, to the day when she looked back at her father and mother weeping on the steps when she left the old home



for the convent. When, at the sound of Mrs. Agens' voice in the hall, she roused herself, she was so sad and so homesick that she retired with a half-formed purpose to go to her mother and her brothers for the solace and advice which she now felt her heart could not find elsewhere.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

The next morning Kate came downstairs looking pale and dejected. Mrs. Agens, who had preceded her but a few minutes, was returning from the kitchen when she saw Kate already in the sitting-room.

"Good-morning, Kate!" said she, as she came bustling cheerily toward her.

"I guess you didn't say those long prayers this morning the doctor's been talking about," and as she came nearer she added in tones changed to sympathetic: "Why! you look as if you were half sick."

"Really, Mrs. Agens," replied Kate, sinking into a chair, "I do feel wretched this morning—I am heart-sick and homesick, and I've made up my mind to go to my people before I am down sick altogether. My visit to father's grave and the sight of the old home yesterday were too much for me, I guess, and I have had a very poor night."

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Agens, drawing closer and placing her hand on Kate's shoulder, "don't you think you will feel better in a day or two? After you have had some breakfast, and a good cup of coffee and a nap by and by, I'm sure you'll feel better."

"Oh no, Mrs. Agens," replied Kate, "you are so kind, but I do not care for any breakfast at all—I couldn't swallow a morsel." Then taking Mrs. Agens' hand in hers, she added: "I came down so early to see the doc-



tor before he went away, to ask him if he would have Ralph take me to High Falls to-day."

"Why, yes, I know he will, but dear me! how disappointed he will be!" replied Mrs. Agens, "for he thought and I did, that you were going to make us such a good long visit."

When the doctor came downstairs a little later, he was astonished upon learning of Kate's unexpected purpose, and, after making all manner of objection and protestation, seeing that Kate's mind had undergone some change, and that she was steadfast in her wish to go, he yielded good-naturedly, although he was indeed very greatly disappointed, for, unknown to Kate and Mrs. Agens, he had made out a long list of questions, adding to it at frequent intervals, which he was most desirous to have answered at the next writing.

After breakfast, therefore, at which Kate only sipped a little coffee, she took leave of Mrs. Agens and the doctor, and set out again with Ralph for High Falls, arriving there only a few minutes before the train was due. Bidding Ralph a hasty good-bye, she hurried into the station and sent forward a telegram informing her brother James of her coming, and a few minutes later entered the train as it halted there in its long flight westward.

Through the long stretches of her journey, she considered and reconsidered what she should say to her mother and her brothers in explanation of her unshadowed appearance. She knew very well it would never do to mention the writing, nor suffer it to be seen, either as a strange and curious thing in itself, or in any way causative of her appearance outside the convent, for they would unhesitatingly declare she had become foolish



or crazy, or, what was worse, possessed, and therefore, as a proper precaution, she must conceal or destroy the paper in her hand bag containing the writing. She shrank from the thought of burning it, she hardly knew why, even though it appeared to be the most direct and effective means of putting it out of sight. Why didn't she leave it with the doctor! She would send it back to him—that would please him, she knew it would. Taking it from her hand bag, she arranged the pages evenly and in order, and rolling them into a compact bundle, she tied and addressed it and handed it to the conductor, requesting him to mail it at the next station for her. Now, surely, her people would not see it and, if she did not choose to tell them of it, they would never know anything about it.

As the train rolled into the station at the end of her journey, she saw her brother James and little Katie scanning the windows of the incoming cars with eager eyes. Hastening out, as soon as the train had come to a standstill, she was quickly reached in the throng and clasped in affectionate embrace by her brother, she in turn embracing little Katie, now grown so much taller and better looking in every way.

"Why, auntie!" she said as soon as released, "I thought you would have on a black dress and one of those white bonnets that nuns wear."

"Did you? I should suppose you would prefer to see me in this suit, similar to what you've always seen me wear," replied Kate.

"Well, but you're a nun, aren't you?" she persisted.

For a moment Kate hardly knew what to say, but with a little hesitation, she answered: "Yes, when I'm at the convent."



This did not seem to wholly satisfy the child, but she subsided, and, entering the carriage, they drove away over the road made familiar by the previous visit, to her brother James' farm.

Her meeting there with her mother was naturally affectionate, as it must needs be under the circumstances, but yet in it there was a little bit of restraint on her mother's side. On the first opportunity bringing them together alone, her mother, with anxiety manifest in her voice and in her face, asked: "Arrah, Katherine, has anythin' happined that yer here so onexpected?"

"No, mother, the Superior thought I did not look well and was confined too much and advised me to go out more, and so I thought I'd come home for a rest," answered Kate, with a sudden pain of guilt at her heart and with no small degree of surprise, for she had not designed to say it, nor in any way had she fixed upon what explanation she would offer, putting it off on account of the difficulty it had presented and leaving the whole matter to the exigencies of the occasion.

"Oh! is that all!" exclaimed her mother, as a look of relief lighted her countenance, and, clasping her hands, she raised her eyes to heaven as she said: "Thanks be to the good God—that takes a burden from my heart."

In the following days of the week of her arrival, the members of the household frequently commented upon Kate's appearance, at one time saying she looked pale and worn, and at another, that she appeared quite as well as ever. She had remained closely indoors since her arrival and therefore, as they were preparing for church on the ensuing Sunday morning, her mother asked: "Now, Katherine, fwhat'll I say av anyone ashks me how long yer goin' to be here, as av coorse some o' thim will?"



"Oh, say for a little while or till I feel better," she answered, without even the vaguest notion as to where or how she was to direct her future. The anxious inquiries of her mother, however, had an uncomfortable and disconcerting effect upon her, and were beginning to shape her thoughts, more or less, in conformity to her own unpremeditated pretense and the justified expectation of her mother. Was it prudent or sensible to permit her life to be directed by an unknown and unseen influence? If there was error or deception in it, think of the sacrifice and irreparable loss to her! On the other hand, assuming it to be true, what was her station in life to be now, that the one designed for her was already wedded to another! She did not know, and really did not care to know, for, as matters were, it seemed to her that her life was broken at this point.

Kneeling at her mother's side at mass, the old-time fervor of her piety began to inflame her heart, fanned by the breathing of her mother's simple but sincere devotions, the familiar and inspiring ceremony at the altar, the reverential attitude of the congregation and the religious atmosphere pervading it all. The sermon, too, as if designed expressly for her, was from the text warning the faithful to beware of false prophets, and so vividly portrayed the resources and expedients of antichrist, that Kate experienced a sense of guiltiness at the remembrance of what she had so freely submitted to and encouraged. Bowing low in penitence, as she felt the love of the old faith repossessing her heart, she thanked God for her deliverance and for the strength of purpose with which she had concealed the uncanny communication altogether from her people.

As they returned to the house after the service, there was a buoyant gladness in her heart like which she had



not known in many days, and which became so apparent, by the return of her old-time cheerfulness and vivacity, that her mother said: "I guess it did you good to be at mass to-day, Katherine."

"Yes, I know it did, mother," she replied in reckless candor, "it did my heart and soul good, and I feel better than I have in many a day."

"Grandma," whispered little Katie, after dinner, in Mrs. Barry's ear, "I saw tears in aunt Katherine's eyes in church—don't you suppose she was thinking of grandpa?"

That evening, after all had retired, Kate wrote a letter to the Mother Superior, telling her that she could not explain why she had left the convent, but that she now felt the profoundest sorrow for it and deep regret for having deserted her in her time of trouble. She besought her to take her back again for any position even the most menial, for now, quite herself again, she knew only too well, that she could never be happy in her life and service of God abroad in the wicked and delusive world. As she began this letter, she very distinctly felt the unseen force tugging at her arm in apparent effort to control her hand, but resisting it with firm and fixed determination and all her strength, she finally shook it off and proceeded with the letter.

As speedily as the mail could accomplish it, she received a reply in which the Superior expressed pleasure over her prospective return, and chided herself for having overtaxed Kate with work and responsibility at a time when her mind and nervous system were under great strain consequent on beholding the beautiful visions. "Return to us, my child," she wrote, "and henceforth we shall endeavor to watch over you with greater diligence and more solicitous care."



Upon meeting her mother, after having received and read this letter, she put her arms affectionately around her neck as she kissed her and said: "Mother dear, to-morrow I am going back to the convent—I feel quite like myself again and I can not be contented nor happy anywhere else."

"Well, asthore," replied her mother, kissing her in turn, "we'll feel bad to see ye goin', but God's will be done, an' I'm thankful to Him that blesses you an' us with yer good intintions."

On the following morning, therefore, she took her departure, leaving them all in affectionate tears. Little Katie's parting with her was most trying, for in her childish way, she regarded the separation quite as she would had it been for the grave.

When she arrived at Marine City, the first snowfall of the season was whitening the ground, and as she went up the driveway leading to the convent door, the large feathery snowdrops covered her as with a white raiment, and she thought, as she observed it, how in like manner God's grace falling upon her in this favored place would cover her with its purifying and sanctifying influence until at last, upon reaching the summit of life, she would be enrobed in holiness. Arriving at the terrace in front of the entrance, she turned and looked back at the prospect half hidden and disappearing from view, and she thought again of how this typified the world now fading out of her life. Half breathing it a last farewell, she turned and, mounting the broad steps, rang the bell. As the door opened, the familiar face of the sister lighted with a smile upon seeing her, and as Kate disappeared within, the door again closed on her this time forever.

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It was learned that she was subsequently admitted to full orders, and, after a life of exemplary piety, she died there in the fulness of years and, as they say of her to this day, "in the order of sanctity."

THE END.



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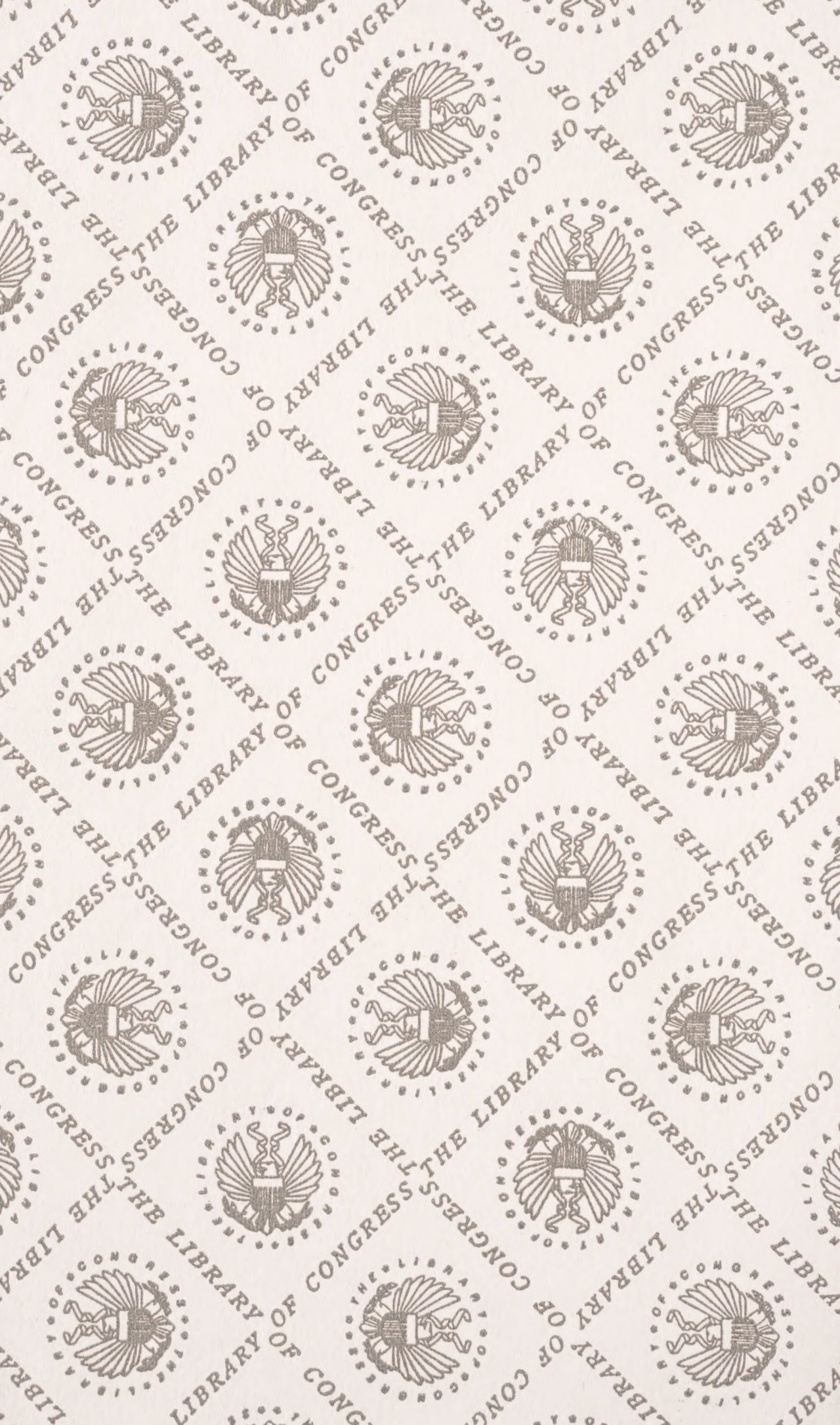














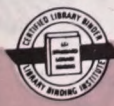


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